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LES MISERABLES

FANTINE

VOL. 1





Edition De Luxe

LES MISÉRABLES

VICTOR HUGO

Jean Valjean at Bishop Myrrel's Bedside

Volume I
Frontispiece



Volume I

FANTINE

Bigelow, Smith & Company
New York



1970-1971

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LES MISÉRABLES

BY

VICTOR HUGO



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CRITICAL NOTE

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

We look in vain in *Les Misérables* for the blemishes appearing in *Ninety Three*. Here, on the other hand, there is perhaps the nearest approach to literary restraint that Hugo has ever made: there is here certainly the ripest and most easy development of his powers. It is the moral intention of this great novel to awaken us a little, if it may be—for such awakenings are unpleasant—to the great cost of this society that we enjoy and profit by, to the labor and sweat of those who support the litter, civilization, in which we ourselves are so smoothly carried forward. People are all glad to shut their eyes; and it gives them a very simple pleasure when they can forget that our laws commit a million individual injustices, to be once roughly just in the general; that the bread that we eat, and the quiet of the family, and all that embellishes life and makes it worth having, have to be purchased by death—by the deaths of animals, and the deaths of men wearied out with labor, and the deaths of those criminals called tyrants and revolutionaries, and the deaths of those revolutionaries called criminals. It is to something of all this that Victor Hugo wishes to open men's eyes in *Les Misérables*; and this moral lesson is worked out in masterly coincidence with the artistic effect. The deadly weight of civilization to those who are below presses sensibly on our shoulders as we read. A sort of mocking indignation grows upon us as we find Society rejecting, again and again, the services of the most serviceable; setting Jean Valjean to pick oakum, casting Galileo into

prison, even crucifying Christ. There is a haunting and horrible sense of insecurity about the book. The terror we thus feel is a terror for the machinery of law, that we can hear tearing, in the dark, good and bad between its formidable wheels with the iron stolidity of all machinery, human or divine. This terror incarnates itself sometimes and leaps horribly out upon us; as when the crouching mendicant looks up, and Jean Valjean, in the light of the street lamp, recognizes the face of the detective; as when the lantern of the patrol flashes suddenly through the darkness of the sewer; or as when the fugitive comes forth at last at evening, by the quiet riverside, and finds the police there also, waiting stolidly for vice and stolidly satisfied to take virtue instead. The whole book is full of oppression, and full of prejudice, which is the great cause of oppression. We have the prejudices of M. Gillenormand, the prejudices of Marius, the prejudices in revolt that defend the barricade, and the throned prejudices that carry it by storm. And then we have the admirable but ill-written character of Javert, the man who had made a religion of the police, and would not survive the moment when he learned that there was another truth outside the truth of laws; a just creation over which the reader will do well to ponder.

With so gloomy a design this great work is still full of life and light and love. The portrait of the good Bishop is one of the most agreeable things in modern literature. The whole scene at Montfermeil is full of the charm that Hugo knows so well how to throw about children. Who can forget the passage where Cosette, sent out at night to draw water, stands in admiration before the illuminated booth, and the huckster behind "*lui faisait un peu l'effet d'être le Père éternel?*" The pathos of the forlorn sabot laid trustingly by the chimney in expectation of the Santa Claus that was not, takes us fairly by the throat; there is nothing in Shakespeare that touches the heart more nearly. The loves of Cosette and Marius are very pure and pleasant, and we cannot refuse our affection to Gavroche, although we may

make a mental reservation of our profound disbelief in his existence. Take it for all in all, there are few books in the world that can be compared with it. There is as much calm and serenity as Hugo has ever attained to; the melodramatic coarsenesses that disfigured *Notre Dame* are no longer present. There is certainly much that is painfully improbable; and again, the story itself is a little too well constructed; it produces on us the effect of a puzzle, and we grow incredulous as we find that every character fits again and again into the plot, and is, like the child's cube, serviceable on six faces; things are not so well arranged in life as all that comes to. Some of the digressions, also, seem out of place, and do nothing but interrupt and irritate. But when all is said, the book remains of masterly conception and of masterly development, full of pathos, full of truth, full of a high eloquence.

PREFACE

So long as there shall exist, by virtue of law and custom, a social damnation artificially creating hells in the midst of civilization, and complicating the destiny which is divine with a fatality which is human; so long as the three problems of the age — the degradation of man through poverty, the ruin of woman through hunger, the crippling of children through ignorance — are not solved; so long as in certain regions social asphyxia is possible,—in other words, and from a still wider point of view, so long as ignorance and wretchedness exist on the earth, books like this cannot be useless.

VICTOR HUGO.

HAUTEVILLE HOUSE.

CONTENTS

VOL. I.

FANTINE

BOOK I.—A JUST MAN.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. M. MYRIEL	1
II. M. MYRIEL BECOMES MONSEIGNEUR BIENVENU	4
III. A GOOD BISHOP, A HARD BISHOPRIC	9
IV. WORKS RESEMBLING WORDS	11
V. MONSEIGNEUR MAKES HIS CASSOCKS LAST TOO LONG	18
VI. BY WHOM THE HOUSE WAS GUARDED	21
VII. CRAVETTE	26
VIII. PHILOSOPHY AFTER DRINKING	30
IX. THE BROTHER DESCRIBED BY THE SISTER	34
X. THE BISHOP FACES A STRANGE LIGHT	37
XI. A RESTRICTION	49
XII. MONSEIGNEUR BIENVENU'S SOLITUDE	53
XIII. WHAT HE BELIEVED	56
XIV. WHAT HE THOUGHT	60

BOOK II.—THE FALL.

I. THE CLOSE OF A DAY'S MARCH	64
II. PRUDENCE COUNSELLED TO WISDOM	76
III. THE HEROISM OF PASSIVE OBEDIENCE	80
IV. DETAILS OF CHEESE-MAKING AT PONTARLIER	85
V. TRANQUILITY	89
VI. JEAN VALJEAN	90
VII. A DESPERATE MAN'S HEART	96
VIII. THE WAVE AND THE SHADOW	103
IX. NEW WRONGS	105
X. THE MAN AROUSED	107

CHAPTER	PAGE
XI. WHAT HE DOES	110
XII. THE BISHOP AT WORK	113
XIII. LITTLE GERVAIS	117

BOOK III.—IN THE YEAR 1817.

I. THE YEAR 1817	126
II. A DOUBLE QUARTET	132
III. FOUR AND FOUR	136
IV. THOLOMYÈS IS SO MERRY AS TO SING A SPANISH SONG	140
V. AT BOMBARDA'S	143
VI. MUTUAL ADORATION	145
VII. THE WISDOM OF THOLOMYÈS	147
VIII. THE DEATH OF A HORSE	152
IX. THE JOYOUS END OF JOY	155

BOOK IV.—TO CONFIDE IS SOMETIMES TO ABANDON.

I. TWO MOTHERS MEET	158
II. THE FIRST SKETCH OF TWO UGLY FIGURES	167
III. THE LARK	169

BOOK V.—THE DESCENT.

I. PROGRESS IN BLACK BEAD MAKING	173
II. MADELEINE	174
III. SUMS LODGED AT LAFITTE'S	178
IV. M. MADELEINE GOES INTO MOURNING	181
V. VAGUE FLASHES ON THE HORIZON	183
VI. FATHER FAUCHELEVENT	189
VII. FAUCHELEVENT BECOMES A GARDENER AT PARIS	192
VIII. MADAME VICTURNIEN SPENDS THIRTY FRANCS ON MORALITY	193
IX. SUCCESS OF MADAME VICTURNIEN	196
X. RESULT OF HER SUCCESS	198
XI. CHRISTUS NOS LIBERAVIT	204
XII. M. BAMATABOIS' LEISURE	205
XIII. THE POLICE OFFICE	207

CONTENTS

xi

BOOK VI.—JAVERT.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE BEGINNING OF REST	218
II. HOW "JEAN" MAY BECOME "CHAMP"	222

BOOK VII.—THE CHAMPMATHIEU AFFAIR.

I. SISTER SIMPLICITY	231
II. MASTER SCAUFFLAIRE'S PERSPICACITY	234
III. A TEMPEST IN A BRAIN	239
IV. THE FORMS THAT SUFFERING TAKES IN SLEEP	258
V. OBSTACLES	260
VI. SISTER SIMPLICITY IS SORELY TRIED	272
VII. THE TRAVELLER ON HIS ARRIVAL TAKES PRECAUTIONS FOR HIS RETURN	279
VIII. INSIDE THE COURT	283
IX. THE TRIAL	287
X. THE SYSTEM OF DENIALS	294
XI. CHAMPMATHIEU MORE AND MORE ASTOUNDED	301

BOOK VIII.—THE COUNTERSTROKE.

I. IN WHAT MIRROR M. MADELEINE LOOKS AT HIS HAIR	306
II. FANTINE IS HAPPY	309
III. JAVERT IS SATISFIED	313
IV. AUTHORITY RESUMES ITS RIGHTS	316
V. A FITTING TOMB	320

FANTINE

BOOK I

A JUST MAN

CHAPTER I

M. MYRIEL

IN 1815, M. Charles François Bienvenu Myriel was bishop of D——. He was a man of about seventy-five years of age, and had held the see of D—— since 1806. Although this detail in no way affects our narrative, it may not be useless, if merely for the sake of exactness, to quote the rumours that were current when he came to the diocese; for what is said of men, whether it be true or false, often occupies as important a place in their life, and especially in their destiny, as what they do. M. Myriel was the son of a councillor of the Parliament of Aix. It was said that his father, who intended that he should be his successor, married him at a very early age, eighteen or twenty, according to a not uncommon custom in parliamentary families.

Charles Myriel, in spite of this marriage (so people said), had been the cause of much tattle. He was well built, though of short stature, elegant, graceful, and witty; and the earlier part of his life was devoted to the world and to gallantry. The Revolution came, events hurried on, and

the parliamentary families, decimated and hunted down, became dispersed. M. Charles Myriel emigrated to Italy in the early part of the Revolution, and his wife, who had been long suffering from a chest complaint, died there, leaving no children. What next took place in M. Myriel's destiny? Did the overthrow of the old French society, the fall of his own family, and the tragic spectacles of '93, more frightful, perhaps, to the emigrants, who saw them from a distance with the magnifying power of terror, cause ideas of renunciation and solitude to germinate in him? Was he, in the midst of one of the distractions and affections which occupied his life, suddenly assailed by one of those mysterious and terrible blows which often prostrate, by striking at his heart, a man whom public catastrophes could not shake by attacking his existence, and his fortune? No one could answer these questions; all that was known was that when he returned from Italy he was a priest.

In 1804, M. Myriel was the priest of B—— (Brignolles). He was already aged, and lived in great retirement. Toward the period of the coronation a small matter connected with his curacy, no one remembers what, took him to Paris. Among other powerful persons he applied to Cardinal Fesch on behalf of his parishioners. One day, when the Emperor was paying a visit to his uncle, the worthy priest, who was waiting in the anteroom, saw his Majesty pass. Napoleon, seeing that the old man viewed him with some curiosity, turned and asked sharply:—

“Who is this goodman who is staring at me?”

“Sire,” said M. Myriel, “you are looking at a good man and I at a great man. We may both profit by it.”

The Emperor, on the same evening, asked the cardinal the priest's name, and some time after M. Myriel, to his great surprise, learned that he had been made bishop of D——. What truth, by the way, was there in the stories about M. Myriel's early life? No one knew, for few persons were acquainted with his family before the Revolution. M. Myriel was fated to endure the lot of every new-comer in a

little town, where there are many mouths that talk, and but few heads that think. He was obliged to endure it, although he was bishop, and because he was bishop. But, after all, the stories with which his name was connected were only stories, rumours, words, remarks, less than words, mere *palaver*, to use a term borrowed from the energetic language of the South. However that might be, after ten years of Episcopal residence at D——, all this gossip, which at the outset affords matter of conversation for small towns and small people, had fallen into deep oblivion. No one would have dared to mention it, no one have dared to recall it.

M. Myriel came to D——, accompanied by an elderly lady, Mlle. Baptistine, who was his sister, and ten years younger than himself. Their only servant was a woman of the same age as Mlle. Baptistine, Madame Magloire, who, having been the priest's servant, now assumed the double title of waiting-woman to his sister, and housekeeper to Monseigneur. Mlle. Baptistine was a tall, pale, slim, gentle person; she realized the ideal expressed by the word "respectable," for it seems necessary for a woman to be a mother in order to be venerable. She had never been pretty, but her whole life, which had been but a succession of pious works, had at last endowed her with a sort of transparent pallor; and in growing older she had acquired what may be called the beauty of goodness. What had been thinness in her youth, became in her maturity transparency; and through this diaphanous veil the angel could be seen. She seemed to be a shadow,—there was hardly enough body for a sex to exist; she was a small quantity of matter containing a spark of light; large eyes always downcast,—an excuse for a soul to remain upon the earth. Madame Magloire was a fair, plump, busy little body, always short of breath,—in the first place, through her activity, and, secondly, in consequence of asthma.

On his arrival, M. Myriel was installed in his Episcopal palace with all the honours required by the imperial decrees which class a bishop immediately after a major-general. The

mayor and the president paid him the first visit; and he on his side paid the first visit to the general and the prefect. When the installation was ended, the town waited to see its bishop at work.

CHAPTER II

M. MYRIEL BECOMES MONSEIGNEUR BIENVENU

THE Episcopal palace of D—— adjoined the hospital. It was a vast and elegant mansion, built at the beginning of the last century by Monseigneur Henri Puget, Doctor of Theology of the Faculty of Paris, and priest of Simore, who was bishop of D—— in 1712. This palace was a true seigneurial residence; everything about it had a noble air,—the bishop's apartments, the parlours, the bedrooms, the courtyard, which was very vast, with arcades after the old Florentine fashion, and the gardens planted with magnificent trees. In the dining-room, a long and superb gallery on the ground-floor, Monseigneur Henri Puget gave a state dinner on July 29, 1714, to Messeigneurs Charles Brûlart de Genlis, archbishop and prince of Embrun, Antoine de Mesgrigny, Capuchin and bishop of Grasse, Philip de Vendôme, grand prior of France and priest of St. Honoré de Lérins, François de Berton de Grillon, baron and bishop of Vence, Cæsar de Sabran de Forcalquier, bishop, lord of Glandève, and Jean Soanen, priest of the Oratory, preacher in ordinary to the king, and lord bishop of Senez. The portraits of these seven reverend personages decorated the dining-room, and the memorable date, July 29, 1714, was engraved in letters of gold on a white marble tablet.

The hospital was a small, single-storied house with a little garden. Three days after his arrival the bishop visited it; and when his visit was over, he asked the superintendent to be kind enough to come to his house.

"How many patients have you now?" he asked.

"Twenty-six, Monseigneur."

"The number I counted," said the bishop.

"The beds are very close together," the superintendent added.

"So I noticed."

"The wards are only bedrooms, and difficult to ventilate."

"I thought so."

"And then, when the sun shines, the garden is very small for the convalescents."

"So I said to myself."

"During epidemics,—and we had typhus fever this year, and the sweating sickness two years ago,—we have as many as one hundred patients, and do not know what to do with them."

"Just what I thought."

"What would you have, Monseigneur!" said the superintendent; "we must put up with it."

This conversation had taken place in the dining-room on the ground-floor. The bishop was silent for a moment, and then turned abruptly to the superintendent.

"How many beds," he asked, "do you think that this room alone would hold?"

"Monseigneur's dining-room?" asked the amazed director.

The bishop looked round the room, and seemed to be measuring it with his eye and judging its capacity.

"It would hold at least twenty beds," he said, as if speaking to himself; then, raising his voice, he added:—

"Come, I will tell you what it is. There is evidently a mistake. You have twenty-six persons in five or six small rooms. Here there are only three of us, and we have room for fifty. There is a mistake, I repeat; you have my house, and I have yours. Restore me mine; this is yours."

Next day the twenty-six poor patients were installed in the bishop's palace, and the bishop was in the hospital. M. Myriel had no property, as his family had been ruined by the Revolution. His sister had an annuity of five hundred

francs, which sufficed for personal expenses. M. Myriel, as bishop, received from the State fifteen thousand francs a year. On the same day that he removed to the hospital, he settled the employment of that sum, once for all, in the following way. We copy a note in his own handwriting.

THE REGULATION OF MY HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES.

For the little Seminary	1500	frcs.
Congregation of the Mission	100	"
The Lazarists of Montdidier	100	"
Seminary of Foreign Missions at Paris	200	"
Congregation of the Holy Ghost	150	"
Religious establishments in the Holy Land	100	"
Societies of Maternal Charity	300	"
Additional for the one at Arles	50	"
Works for improvement of prisons	400	"
Relief and deliverance of prisoners	500	"
For liberation of fathers imprisoned for debt	1000	"
Addition to the salary of poor school-masters in the diocese	2000	"
Distribution of grain in the Upper Alps	100	"
Ladies' Society for gratuitous instruction of poor girls at D——, Manosque, and Sisteron	1500	"
For the poor	6000	"
Personal expenses	1000	"
Total	15,000	"

During the whole time that he held the see of D——, M. Myriel made no change in this arrangement. He called this, as we see, regulating his household expenses. The arrangement was accepted with a smile by Mlle. Baptistine; for that sainted woman regarded M. Myriel at once as her brother and her bishop,—her friend according to nature, her superior according to the Church. She loved and venerated him in the simplest way. When he spoke she bowed, when he acted she assented. The servant alone, Madame Magloire, murmured a little. The bishop, it will be noticed, only reserved one thousand francs for himself, and on this sum, with Mlle. Baptistine's pension, these two old women and the old man lived. And when a village priest came to D——, the bishop managed to entertain him, thanks to the

strict economy of Madame Magloire and the sensible management of Mlle. Baptistine. One day, when he had been at D—— about three months, the bishop said:—

“For all that, I am dreadfully hard put to it.”

“I should think so,” exclaimed Madame Magloire. “Monseigneur has not even claimed the income which the department owes him for his carriage in town and for his visitations. That was the custom with bishops in other times.”

“True,” said the bishop, “you are right, Madame Magloire.” He made his claim, and shortly after, the council-general, taking the demand into consideration, voted him the annual sum of three thousand francs, under the heading, “Allowance to the bishop for maintenance of carriage, post-ing charges, and outlay in visitations.”

This caused an uproar among the townspeople, and a senator of the empire, ex-member of the Council of the Five Hundred, favourable to the 18th Brumaire, and holding a magnificent appointment near D——, wrote to the minister of public worship, Bigot de Préameneu, a short, angry, and confidential letter, from which we quote these authentic lines:—

“ . . . Maintenance of carriage! what can he want one for in a town of less than four thousand inhabitants? Visitation charges! In the first place, what is the good of visitations at all? and, secondly, how can he travel post in this mountainous country, where there are no roads, and people must journey on horseback? The very bridge over the Durance at Château Arnoux can hardly bear the weight of an ox-cart. These priests are all the same, greedy and avaricious! This one played the good apostle when he arrived, but now he is like the rest, and must have his carriage and post-chaise. He wishes to be as luxurious as the old bishops. Oh, these priests! My lord, matters will never go on well till the Emperor has delivered us from the skullcaps. Down with the Pope! [There was a quarrel at the time with Rome.] As for me, I am for Cæsar and Cæsar alone; etc., etc., etc.”

The affair, on the other hand, greatly gladdened Madame Magloire. “Come,” she said to Mlle. Baptistine, “Monseigneur began with others, but he was obliged to end with

himself after all. He has regulated all his charities, and here are three thousand francs for us at last!"

That same evening the bishop wrote, and gave his sister, a note conceived thus:—

CARRIAGE AND TRAVELLING EXPENSES.

To provide the hospital patients with broth . . .	1500 frcs.
The Society of Maternal Charity at Aix . . .	250 "
Ditto at Draguignan . . .	250 "
For foundlings . . .	500 "
For orphans . . .	500 "
Total . . .	3,000 "

Such was M. Myriel's budget. As for any accidental receipts, such as fees for bans, dispensations, consecrating churches or chapels, marriages, etc., the bishop collected them from the rich with so much the more eagerness because he distributed them to the poor. In a short time offerings of money flowed in. Those who had and those who wanted tapped at M. Myriel's door, the latter coming for the alms which the former had just deposited. In less than a year the bishop became the treasurer of all charity and the cashier of all distress. Considerable sums passed through his hands, but nothing could induce him to make any change in his mode of life or to add the slightest superfluity to his bare necessities.

Far from it. As there is always more wretchedness below than brotherhood above, all was given, so to speak, before being received; it was like water on dry ground: however much he might receive, he never had a farthing. At such times he stripped himself. It being the custom for bishops to place their Christian names at the head of their mandates and pastoral letters, the poor people of the country with a kind of affectionate instinct, selected the one among their bishop's names which conveyed a meaning to them, and called him Monseigneur (Bienvenu) Welcome. We will do like them, and call him so when occasion serves. Moreover, the

name pleased him. "I like that name," he would say. "The 'Welcome' makes up for the 'My Lord.'"

We do not claim that the portrait we have drawn is probable; we merely say that it is a likeness.

CHAPTER III

A GOOD BISHOP; A HARD BISHOPRIC

THE bishop, though he had converted his coach into alms, made his visitations none the less. The diocese of D—— is a fatiguing one; there are few plains, many mountains, and hardly any roads, as we saw just now; twenty-two curacies, forty-one vicarages, and two hundred and eighty-five chapels of ease. It was a task to visit all these, but the bishop managed to do it. He went on foot when the place was near, in a cart when it was in the plain, and on muleback when it was in the mountains. The two old women generally accompanied him, but when the journey was too hard for them he went alone.

One day he arrived at Senez, which is an old Episcopal town, mounted on a donkey; his purse, which was very light at the time, had not allowed him any other equipage. The mayor of the city met him at the door of the bishop's palace, and watched him dismount with scandalized eyes. A few townspeople were laughing around him. "Mr. Mayor and gentlemen," said the bishop, "I see what it is that shocks you. You consider it great pride for a poor priest to ride an animal which our Saviour once rode. I did so from necessity, I assure you, and not from vanity."

On his travels the bishop was kind and indulgent, and preached less than he conversed. His arguments and examples were never far-fetched, and to the inhabitants of one district he quoted the example of an adjacent district. In

those regions where people were harsh to the poor he would say, "Look at the people of Briançon. They have given the poor, the widows, and orphans the right to have their fields mowed three days before all the rest. They rebuild their houses for them gratuitously when they are in ruins. Hence it is a country blessed of God. For one hundred years not a single murder has been committed there." To those eager for gain and good crops, he said, "Look at the people of Embrun. If a father of a family at harvest-time has his sons in the army, his daughters serving in the town, or if he be ill or unable to work, the priest recommends him in his sermon; and on Sunday, after mass, all the villagers, men, women, and children, go into his field and cut and carry home his crop." To families divided by questions of money or inheritance, he said, "Look at the mountaineers of Devolny, a country so wild that the nightingale is not heard there once in fifty years. Well, when the father of a family dies there, the boys go off to seek their fortune, and leave the property to the girls, so that they may find husbands." In those parts where the farmers were fond of lawsuits, and ruined themselves in writs, he would say, "Look at those good peasants of the valley of Queyras. There are three thousand souls there. Why, it is like a little republic. Neither judge nor bailiff is known there, and the mayor does everything. He divides the imposts, taxes everybody conscientiously, settles quarrels gratis, divides inheritances without fees, gives sentences without costs, and is obeyed because he is a just man among simple men." In villages where there was no school-master, he again quoted the people of Queyras. "Do you know what they do? As a small place containing only twelve or fifteen families cannot always support a master, they have school-masters paid by the whole valley, who go from village to village, spending a week in one, ten days in another, and teaching. These masters go to the fairs, where I have seen them. They can be recognized by the pens that they wear in their hat-bands. Those who only teach reading have but one pen; those who

teach reading and arithmetic have two; those who teach reading, arithmetic, and Latin have three. But what a disgrace it is to be ignorant! Do like the people of Queyras."

He spoke thus, gravely and paternally. When examples failed him he invented parables, going straight to the point, with few phrases and a good deal of imagery. His was the eloquence of the Apostles, convincing and persuading.

CHAPTER IV

WORKS RESEMBLING WORDS

THE bishop's conversation was affable and lively. He condescended to the level of the two old women who spent their life beside him, and when he laughed it was a school-boy's laugh. Madame Magloire was fond of calling him "your Eminence." One day he rose from his easy-chair and went to fetch a book from his library: As it was on one of the top shelves, and as the bishop was short, he could not reach it. "Madame Magloire," he said, "bring me a chair, for my Eminence does not reach to that shelf."

One of his distant relatives, the Countess de Lô, rarely let an opportunity slip to enumerate in his presence what she called the "expectations" of her three sons. She had several relatives who were very old and close to death's door, of whom her sons were the natural heirs. The youngest of the three would inherit one hundred thousand francs a year from a great-aunt; the second would succeed to his uncle's dukedom, the third to his grandfather's peerage. The bishop generally listened in silence to this innocent and pardonable maternal display. Once, however, he seemed more dreamy than usual, while Madame de Lô was repeating all the details of their successions and "expectations." She broke off somewhat impatiently. "Good gracious, cousin," said she,

"what are you thinking about?" "I am thinking," said the bishop, "of something odd, which, if my memory serves me, is in Saint Augustine. 'Place your hopes in him to whom no one succeeds.'"

On another occasion, receiving a letter announcing the death of a country gentleman, in which, in addition to the dignities of the defunct, all the feudal and noble titles of all his relatives were recorded,—“What a pair of shoulders death has! What a fine load of titles he is made lightly to bear,” he exclaimed, “and what sense men must possess thus to employ the tomb in satisfying their vanity.” At times he was gifted with a gentle raillery, which nearly always contained a serious meaning. During one Lent a young vicar came to D—— and preached at the cathedral. He was rather eloquent, and the subject of his sermon was charity. He invited the rich to give to the poor in order to escape hell, which he painted in the most frightful way he could, and to gain paradise, which he made desirable and charming. There was among the congregation a rich, retired merchant, somewhat of a miser, who had made \$400,000 by manufacturing coarse cloths, serges, and woollen galloons. Never in his whole life had M. Géborand given alms to a beggar, but after this sermon it was remarked that he gave a cent every Sunday to the old beggar women at the cathedral door. There were six of them to share it. One day the bishop saw him bestowing his charity, and said to his sister, with a smile, “Look at M. Géborand buying a cent’s worth of paradise.”

When it was a question of charity, he would not let himself be rebuffed even by a refusal, and at such times made remarks which caused people to reflect. Once he was begging for the poor in a drawing-room of the town. The Marquis de Champtercier was present, a rich, avaricious, old man, who contrived to be at once ultra-Royalist and ultra-Voltairian. This variety has existed. When the bishop came to him he touched his arm, “Marquis, you must give me something.” The marquis turned and answered drily: “I have

my own poor, my lord." "Give them to me," said the bishop. One day he delivered the following sermon at the cathedral:—

"My very dear brethren, my good friends, there are in France three hundred and twenty thousand peasants' houses which have only three openings; eighteen hundred and seventeen thousand which have only two openings,—the door and the window; and, lastly, three hundred and forty-six thousand hovels which have only one opening,—the door. All this comes from a thing called the door-and-window tax. Just place poor families, aged women, and little children, in these houses, and then see the fevers and sickness! Alas! God gives men fresh air, and the law sells it to them. I do not blame the law, but I bless God. In Isère, in Var, in the two Alps, Upper and Lower, the peasants have not even wheelbarrows, but carry manure on their backs; they have no candles, but burn resinous logs and pieces of rope dipped in pitch. It is the same through all the hilly part of Dauphiny. They make bread for six months, and bake it with dried cow-dung. In winter they break this bread with an axe and steep it in water for four and twenty hours before they can eat it. Brethren, have pity; see how people suffer around you!"

A Provençal by birth, he soon became familiar with all the dialects of the South. He said *Eh bé monssu sès sage*, as in Lower Languedoc; *Onté anaras passa*, as in the Lower Alps; *Puente un bouen mouton embe un bouen fromage grase*, as in Upper Dauphiny. This greatly pleased the people, and did no little to secure him admission to all minds. He was at home in the hut and on the mountain. He could say the grandest things in the most vulgar idiom, and as he spoke all languages he entered all hearts. However, he was the same to people of fashion as to the lower classes.

He never condemned anything hastily or without taking the circumstances into account. He would say, "Let us look at the road by which the fault has come." Being, as he called himself with a smile, an ex-sinner, he had none of the asperities of the Puritan; and careless of the frowns of the unco' good, he professed loudly a doctrine which might be summed up as follows: "Man has upon him the flesh which is at once his burden and his temptation. He carries it with him and yields to it. He must watch, restrain, and repress it, and only obey it in the last extremity. In this

obedience there may still be a fault; but the fault thus committed is venial. It is a fall, but a fall on the knees, which may end in prayer. To be a saint is the exception; to be a just man is the rule. Err, fail, sin, but be just. The least possible amount of sin is the law of man; no sin at all is the dream of angels. All that is earthly is subject to sin, for sin is a gravitation."

When people cried out and grew indignant he would say with a smile, "Oh, ho! it seems as if this is a great crime which all the world is committing. Look at the startled hypocrites, hastening to protest and place themselves under cover."

He was indulgent to women and poor people, on whom the burden of human society presses. He would say, "The faults of women, children, servants, the weak, the poor, and the ignorant are the fault of husbands, fathers, masters, the strong, the rich, and the learned." He also said, "Teach the ignorant as much as you possibly can; society is to blame for not giving instruction freely, and is responsible for the night it produces. A soul is full of darkness, and sin is committed; but the guilty person is not the man who commits the sin, but he who produces the darkness."

As we see, he had a strange manner, peculiarly his own, of judging things. I suspect that he obtained it from the Gospel. One day he heard in a drawing-room the story of a trial which was shortly to take place. A wretched man, through love of a woman and a child he had by her, having exhausted his resources, coined false money, which at that period was an offence punished by death. The woman was arrested while passing the first false piece made by the man. She was held, but there was no proof against her. She alone could establish the charge against her lover and ruin him by confessing. She denied. They pressed her, but she persisted in her denial. Upon this, the prosecuting lawyer had an idea: he invented an infidelity on the part of the lover, and contrived, by cleverly presenting the woman with fragments of letters, to persuade her that she had a rival, and that the man was deceiving her. Then, exasperated by jeal-

ousy, she denounced her lover, confessed everything, proved everything. The man was ruined, and would shortly be tried with his accomplice at Aix. The story was told, and everybody was delighted with the lawyer's cleverness. By bringing jealousy into play, he brought out the truth through passion, and obtained justice through revenge. The bishop listened to all this in silence, and when they ended he asked: "Where will this man and woman be tried?" "At the assizes." Then he continued, "And where will the prosecuting attorney be tried?"

A tragic event occurred at D——. A man was condemned to death for murder. He was a wretched fellow, not exactly educated, not exactly ignorant, who had been a mountebank at fairs and a public letter-writer. The trial attracted the attention of the townspeople. On the eve of the day of the execution the chaplain of the prison was taken ill, and a priest was wanted to attend the sufferer in his last moments. The priest was sent for, and it seems that he refused, saying, "It is no business of mine, I have nothing to do with the mountebank. I am ill too; and besides, it is not my place." This answer was reported to the bishop, who said, "He is right, it is not his place; it is mine." He went instantly to the prison, entered the mountebank's cell, called him by name, took his hand, and spoke to him. He spent the whole day with him, forgetting to sleep or to eat while praying to God for the soul of the condemned man. He told him the best truths, which are the most simple. He was father, brother, friend,—bishop only to bless. He taught him everything, while reassuring and consoling him. This man was about to die in despair; death was to him like an abyss, and he shuddered as he stood on its mournful brink. He was not ignorant enough to be completely indifferent, and his sentence, which was a profound shock, had broken through that wall which divides us from the mystery of things, and which we call life. He peered incessantly out of this world through these fatal breaches, and only saw darkness; but the bishop showed him a light.

On the morrow, when they came to fetch the wretched man, the bishop was with him. He followed him, and showed himself to the mob in his purple cassock, with the episcopal cross round his neck, side by side with this rope-bound wretch. He entered the cart with him; he mounted the scaffold with him. The victim, so gloomy and so cast down on the previous day, was radiant; he felt that his soul was reconciled, and he hoped for heaven. The bishop embraced him, and as the knife was about to fall, said: "The man whom his fellow-men kill, God raises from the dead. He whom his brothers reject, finds his Father once more. Pray, believe, enter into life! The Father is there!" When he came down from the scaffold, there was something in his look which made the people make way for him; it was impossible to say whether his pallor or his serenity was the more to be admired. On returning to the humble abode, which he smilingly called his palace, he said to his sister: "I have just been officiating pontifically."

As the most sublime things are often those least understood, there were persons in the town who said, in commenting on the bishop's conduct, "It is affectation." This, however, was only the talk of drawing-rooms; the common people, who do not find evil intents in holy acts, were moved, and admired him. As for the bishop, the sight of the guillotine was a shock to him, and it was long ere he recovered from it.

The scaffold, in fact, when it stands erect before you, has something about it that produces hallucination. We may feel a certain amount of indifference to the death penalty; we may refrain from expressing an opinion, from saying yes or not, so long as we have never seen a guillotine with our own eyes; but when we have come across one, the shock is violent, and we must decide either for or against. Some admire it, like De Maistre; others execrate it, like Beccaria. The guillotine is the concretion of the law; it is called *vindicta*. It is not neutral, and does not allow you to remain neutral. He who sees it, shudders with the most mysterious of shudders. All social questions raise their notes of in-

terrogation around this chopping-knife. The scaffold is a vision; it is not a piece of carpenter's work, it is not a machine, it is not a lifeless mechanism made of wood, steel, and ropes. It seems to be a living being possessing a gloomy power of initiative; we might say that the wood-work lives, that the machine hears, that the mechanism understands, that the wood, the steel, and the ropes have a will of their own. In the frightful dream into which its presence casts the soul, the scaffold seems terrible, and to take a personal part in what it does. The scaffold is the accomplice of the executioner; it devours; it eats flesh and drinks blood. The scaffold is a monster, manufactured by the judge and the carpenter,—a spectre that seems to live a sort of horrible life made up of all the death it has inflicted. Hence the impression was terrible and deep; on the day after the execution, and for many days, the bishop appeared to be crushed. The almost violent serenity of the mournful moment had vanished; the phantom of social justice haunted him. He who usually returned from all his sacred functions with such radiant satisfaction seemed to be reproaching himself. At times he talked to himself, and stammered disconnected sentences in a low voice. Here is one which his sister overheard and treasured up: "I did not think that it was so monstrous. It is wrong to become so absorbed in the divine law as to lose sight of the human law. Death belongs to God alone. By what right do men meddle with that unknown thing?"

In time these impressions were weakened, and perhaps effaced. Still it was noticed that from this time the bishop avoided crossing the place of execution.

M. Myriel might be called at any hour to the bedside of the sick and dying. He knew that his greatest duty and greatest labour lay there. Widowed or orphaned families had no occasion to send for him, for he came without being called. He had the art of sitting down and holding his tongue for hours, beside a man who had lost the wife he loved, or a mother bereaved of her child. As he knew when

to be silent, he also knew when to speak. What an admirable consoler he was! He did not try to efface grief by forgetfulness, but to aggrandize and dignify it by hope. He would say: "Beware how you turn to the dead. Do not think of that which perishes. Look fixedly, and you will see the living light of your beloved dead in heaven." He knew that faith is healthy; and he sought to counsel and calm the desperate man by pointing out to him the resigned man, and to transform the grief that gazes at a grave by showing it the grief that looks at a star.

CHAPTER V

MONSEIGNEUR MAKES HIS CASSOCKS LAST TOO LONG

M. MYRIEL'S domestic life was full of the same thoughts as his public life. To any one inquiring closely into it, the voluntary poverty in which the bishop lived would have been a solemn and charming sight. Like all old men, and like most thinkers, he slept little, but that short sleep was deep. In the morning he mused for an hour, and then said mass either at the cathedral or at home. Mass over, he breakfasted on rye bread dipped in the milk of his own cows. Then he set to work.

A bishop is a very busy man. He must daily receive the secretary of the bishopric, who is generally a canon, and almost every day his vicars-general. He has congregations to censure, permissions to grant, a whole ecclesiastical library to examine, in the shape of prayer-books, diocesan catechisms, books of hours, etc.; charges to write, sermons to authorize, priests and mayors to reconcile, a clerical correspondence, an administrative correspondence, on one side the State, on the other the Holy See,—in a word, a thousand tasks. The time which these thousand tasks, his offices, and

his breviary left him, he gave first to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted; the time which the afflicted, the sick, and the poor left him, he gave to work. Sometimes he hoed in his garden, at other times he read and wrote. He had only one name for both sorts of labour; he called them *gardening*. "The mind is a garden," he would say.

Toward midday, when the weather was fine, he went out and walked in the country or in town, frequently entering the cottages. He could be seen walking alone in deep thought, looking down, leaning on his long cane, dressed in his warm, wadded, violet garment, with his violet stockings thrust into clumsy shoes, and wearing his flat hat, through each corner of which were passed three golden acorns as tassels. It was a festival wherever he appeared; it seemed as if his passing had something warming and cheering about it. Old men and children came to the door to greet the bishop as they did the sun. He blessed them and they blessed him, and his house was pointed out to anybody who was in want of anything. Now and then he stopped, spoke to the little boys and girls and smiled on their mothers. He visited the poor so long as he had any money; when he had none, he visited the rich. As he made his cassocks last a long time, and did not wish the fact to be noticed, he never went into town save in his wadded violet coat. This was rather uncomfortable in summer.

On returning home he dined. The dinner resembled the breakfast. At half-past eight in the evening he supped with his sister, Madame Magloire standing behind them and waiting on them. Nothing could be more frugal than this meal; but if the bishop had a priest to supper, Madame Magloire would take advantage of it to serve Monseigneur with some excellent fish from the lake, or fine game from the mountains. Every priest furnished an excuse for a good meal, and the bishop held his tongue. On other occasions his repast consisted only of vegetables boiled in water and soup made with oil. Hence it was said in the town: "When the bishop does not fare like a priest, he fares like a trappist."

After supper he conversed for half an hour with Mlle. Baptistine and Madame Magloire; then he retired to his room and began writing again, either on loose leaves or on the margin of some folio. He was well read and a bit of a scholar, and left behind him five or six curious MSS. on theological subjects; among others, a dissertation on the verse of Genesis, *The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters*. He compares this verse with three texts: the Arabic version, *The winds of God blew*; that of Josephus, *A wind from on high fell upon the earth*; and the Chaldaic paraphrase of Onkelos, *A wind from God breathed upon the face of the waters*. In another of these dissertations he examines the works of Hugo, bishop of Ptolemais, great-grand-uncle of him who writes this book, and he proves that to this bishop must be attributed the various opuscles published in the last century under the pseudonym of Barleycourt. At times, in the midst of his reading, no matter what book he held in his hands, he would suddenly fall into a deep meditation, from which he only emerged to write a few lines on the pages of the book. These lines have frequently no connection with the book that contains them. We have before us a note written by him on the margin of a quarto entitled "Correspondence of Lord Germain with Generals Clinton and Cornwallis, and the Admirals of the American Station. Versailles, Poincot, bookseller; and Paris, Pissot, bookseller, Quai des Augustins." Here is the note:

"O Thou that art! Ecclesiastes calls Thee Omnipotent; the Maccabees call Thee Creator; the Epistle to the Ephesians calls Thee Liberty; Baruch calls Thee Immensity; the Psalms call Thee Wisdom and Truth; St. John calls Thee Light; the Book of Kings calls Thee Lord; Exodus calls Thee Providence; Leviticus, Holiness; Esdras, Justice; Creation calls Thee God; man calls Thee Father; but Solomon calls Thee Mercy, and that is the fairest of all Thy names."

About nine o'clock the two women withdrew to their bedrooms on the first-floor, leaving him alone till morning, on the ground-floor. Here we must give an exact idea of the bishop's apartments.

CHAPTER VI

BY WHOM THE HOUSE WAS GUARDED

THE house he lived in consisted, as we have said, of a ground-floor and one story above, three rooms on the ground, three bedrooms on the first-floor, and above them a garret. Behind the house was a quarter of an acre of garden. The two women occupied the first-floor, and the bishop lodged below. The first room, which opened on the street, served him as dining-room, the second as bedroom, the third as oratory. You could not get out of the oratory without passing through the bedroom, or out of the bedroom without passing through the dining-room. At the end of the oratory was a closed alcove with a bed, for any one who stayed the night, and this bed the bishop offered to country priests whom business or the calls of their parish brought to D——.

The hospital surgery, a small building added to the house and built on a part of the garden, had been altered into kitchen and cellar. There was also in the garden a stable which had formerly been the hospital kitchen, and in which the bishop kept two cows. Whatever the quantity of milk they yielded, he invariably sent one-half every morning to the hospital patients. "I am paying my tithes," he was wont to say.

His room was rather spacious, and very hard to heat in cold weather. As wood is excessively dear at D——, he hit on the idea of partitioning off a portion of the cow-house with planks. Here he spent his evenings during severe seasons, and called it his "winter parlour." Here, as in the dining-room, there was no furniture but a square deal table and four straw chairs. The dining-room was also adorned with an old side-board stained to imitate rosewood. The bishop had made the altar which decorated his oratory, out of a similar side-board, suitably draped with white cloths and

imitation lace. His rich penitents and the religious ladies of D—— had often subscribed to pay for a handsome new altar for Monseigneur's oratory; each time he took the money and gave it to the poor. "The finest of all altars," he would say, "is the soul of an unhappy man who is consoled and thanks God."

There were in his oratory two straw prie-dieus, and in his bedroom an arm-chair, also of straw. When by chance he received seven or eight persons at the same time, the prefect, the general, the staff of the regiment quartered in the town, or some pupils of the seminary, the chairs had to be brought in from the winter parlour, the prie-dieus from the oratory, and the arm-chair from the bedroom; in this way as many as eleven seats could be collected for the visitors. For each new visitor a room was stripped. It sometimes happened that there were twelve; in such a case, the bishop concealed the embarrassing situation by standing before the fire if it was winter, or walking up and down the room if it was summer.

There was also another chair in the alcove, but the straw was half gone, and it had but three legs, so that it could only be used when propped against the wall. Mlle. Baptistine also had in her bedroom a very large wooden easy-chair, which had once been gilt and covered with flowered chintz, but it had been necessary to hoist this chair to the first-floor through the window, owing to the narrowness of the stairs; and hence it could not be reckoned on in any emergency. It had been Mlle. Baptistine's ambition to buy parlour furniture of mahogany covered with yellow plush; but this would have cost at least five hundred francs, and, seeing that she had only succeeded in saving for this object forty-two francs and five sous in five years, she gave up the idea. Besides, who is there that ever attains his ideal?

Nothing more simple can be imagined than the bishop's bedroom,—a long window opening on the garden; opposite it, the bed, an iron hospital-bed with a canopy of green serge; in the shadow of the bed, behind a curtain, toilet articles,

still revealing the elegant habits of the man of fashion; two doors, one near the fireplace leading to the oratory, the other near the bookcase leading to the dining-room. The bookcase was a large cupboard with glass fronts, full of books; the fireplace of wood, painted to imitate marble, was habitually fireless; in the fireplace were a pair of iron andirons ornamented with two vases, with garlands and flutings which had once been silvered,—a species of Episcopal luxury; over the fireplace a crucifix of copper, from which the silver had been rubbed off, fastened to threadbare black velvet, in a frame which had lost its gilding; by the window, was a large table with an inkstand, loaded with a confusion of papers and heavy tomes; before the table, the straw arm-chair; in front of the bed, a prie-dieu borrowed from the oratory.

Two portraits, in oval frames, hung on the wall on either side of the bed. Small gilded inscriptions on the neutral-tinted ground of the canvas by the side of the figures indicated that the portraits represented, one the Abbé de Chaliot, bishop of St. Claude; the other the Abbé Tourteau, vicar-general of Agde and abbé of Grand Champs, belonging to the Cistercian order in the diocese of Chartres. The bishop, on inheriting this room from the hospital patients, found the pictures there, and left them. They were priests, probably donors,—two motives for respecting them. All he knew of the two personages was that they were appointed by the king, the one to his bishopric, the other to his benefice, on the same day, April 27, 1785. Madame Magloire having taken down the portraits to remove the dust, the bishop found this circumstance recorded in faded ink, on a small square of paper turned yellow by time, and fastened by four wafers behind the portrait of the abbé of Grand Champs.

He had at his window an antique curtain of heavy woollen stuff, which had grown so old that Madame Magloire, in order to avoid the expense of a new one, was obliged to make a large patch in the very middle of it. The patch formed a cross, and the bishop often drew attention to it. "How pleasant that is," he would say. All the rooms in the house,

ground-floor and first-floor, were whitewashed, which is the fashion in barracks and hospitals. Still, some years later, Madame Magloire discovered, as we shall see further on, paintings, under the whitewashed paper, in Mlle. Baptistine's bedroom. Before it was a hospital, this house had been the Town Hall. Hence this decoration. The rooms were paved with red bricks, which were washed every week; and there were straw mats in front of all the beds. The house, moreover, managed by two women, was exquisitely clean from top to bottom; this was the only luxury the bishop allowed himself, for, as he said, "It takes nothing from the poor." We must admit, however, that of their former possessions there still remained six silver spoons and forks and a soup-ladle, which Madame Magloire daily viewed with delight, shining splendidly on the coarse white table-cloth. And as we are here depicting the bishop of D—— as he was, we must add that he had said, more than once, "I do not think I could give up eating with silver." To this plate must be added two heavy candlesticks of massive silver, which the bishop inherited from a great-aunt. These candlesticks held two wax candles, and usually figured on the bishop's mantle-piece. When he had any one to dinner, Madame Magloire lit the candles and placed the two candlesticks on the table. There was in the bishop's bedroom, at the head of his bed, a small cupboard in the wall, in which Madame Magloire each night placed the forks and spoons and the large ladle; I am bound to add that the key was never taken out.

The garden, spoiled to some extent by the ugly buildings to which we have referred, was composed of four walks, radiating from a small pond; another walk ran all round the garden close to the surrounding white wall. Between these walks were four box-bordered squares. In three of them Madame Magloire grew vegetables; in the fourth the bishop had planted flowers; here and there were a few fruit-trees. Once Madame Magloire said, with a sort of gentle mischief, "My lord, although you turn everything to use, here is a useless plot. It would be better to have lettuces

than bouquets." "Madame Magloire," the bishop answered, "you are mistaken; the beautiful is as useful as the useful." He added, after a moment's silence, "More so, perhaps."

This plot, composed of three or four beds, occupied the bishop almost as much as his books did. He liked to spend an hour or two there, cutting, raking, and making holes in which he dropped seeds. He was not so hostile to insects as a gardener would have liked. However, he made no pretensions to botany; he was ignorant of groups and consistency; he did not make the slightest attempt to decide between Tournefort and the natural method; he was not a partisan either of Jussieu or Linnæus. He did not study plants, but he loved flowers. He greatly respected learned men, but he respected the ignorant even more; and, without ever failing in these two respects, he watered his beds every summer evening with a green tin watering-pot.

The house had not a single door that locked. The door of the dining-room, which, as we said, opened directly on the cathedral square, had formerly been adorned with bolts and locks like a prison gate. The bishop had all this iron removed, and the door was only latched either night or day; the first passer-by, no matter the hour, had only to push it. At the outset, the two women were greatly alarmed by this never-closed door; but the bishop said to them, "Have bolts placed on the doors of your rooms if you like." In the end they shared his confidence, or at least affected to do so; Madame Magloire alone was frightened from time to time. As regards the bishop, his idea is explained, or at least indicated, by these three lines, which he wrote on the margin of a Bible: "This is the distinction: the physician's door should never be closed; the priest's door should always be open." In another book, entitled "Philosophy of Medical Science," he wrote this other note: "Am I not a physician like them? I also have my patients; in the first place, I have theirs, whom they call the sick, and then I have my own, whom I call the unhappy." Again, he wrote: "Do not ask the name of the man who seeks a bed from you, for the

man who is embarrassed by his name is the very one that needs shelter."

It came about that a worthy priest — I forget whether he came from Couloubroux or Pompierry — thought proper to ask one day, probably at the instigation of Madame Magloire, whether my lord was quite certain that he was not acting rather imprudently in leaving his door open day and night for any who liked to enter, and if he did not fear lest some misfortune might happen in a house so poorly guarded. The bishop tapped his shoulder with gentle gravity, and said, "*Nisi dominus custodierit domum, in vanum vigilant qui custodiunt eam.*"¹

Then he spoke of something else. He was fond of saying, too, "There is the bravery of the priest as well as that of the colonel of dragoons, only," he added, "ours must be a quiet bravery."

CHAPTER VII

CRAVATTE

THIS is the natural place for a fact which we must not omit, for it is one of those which best show us what manner of man the bishop of D—— was. After the destruction of the band of Gaspard Bès, which had infested the gorges of Ollioules, Cravatte, one of his lieutenants, took refuge in the mountains. He hid himself for a time with his brigands, the remnant of Bès's band, in the district of Nice, then went to Piedmont, and suddenly re-appeared in France, near Barcelonnette. He was seen first at Jauziers, and next at Tuiles; he hid himself in the caves of the Joug de l'Aigle, and descended thence on the hamlets and villages by the ravines of the Ubaye. He even pushed as far as

¹ Unless the Lord guard the house, in vain do they watch who guard it.

Embrun, entered the church one night and plundered the sacristy. His robberies laid waste the country, and the police were in vain placed on his track. He constantly escaped, and at times even offered resistance, for he was a bold scoundrel. In the midst of all this terror, the bishop arrived on his way to Chastelar, and the mayor came to urge him to turn back. Cravatte held the mountains as far as Arche and beyond, and there was danger, even with an escort. It would be uselessly exposing three or four unhappy police officers.

"For that reason," said the bishop, "I intend to go without escort."

"Can you mean it, my lord?" exclaimed the mayor.

"I mean it so fully that I absolutely refuse an escort, and intend to start in an hour."

"My lord, you will not do that!"

"There is in the mountains," the bishop continued, "a humble little parish, which I have not visited for three years. They are good friends of mine, quiet, honest shepherds. They own one goat out of every thirty that they guard; they make very pretty woollen cords of different colours, and they play mountain airs on small six-holed flutes. They need to hear about heaven every now and then; and what would they think of a bishop who was afraid? What would they say if I did not go?"

"But, my lord, the robbers!"

"Ah," said the bishop, "you are right; I may meet them. They too must need to be told about heaven."

"My lord, they are a pack of wolves."

"Mr. Mayor, it may be that this is the very flock of which Christ has made me the shepherd. Who knows the ways of Providence?"

"My lord, they will rob you."

"I have nothing."

"They will kill you."

"A poor old priest who passes along mumbling his prayers? Nonsense; what good would that do them?"

"Oh, good gracious, if you were to meet them!"

"I would ask them for alms for my poor."

"My lord, do not go. In Heaven's name, my lord! You risk your life."

"My good sir," said the bishop, "is that all? I am not in this world to save my life, but to save souls."

There was no help for it, and he set out accompanied only by a lad who offered to act as his guide. His obstinacy created a sensation in the country, and caused considerable alarm.

He would not take either his sister or Madame Magloire with him. He crossed the mountain on muleback, met nobody, and reached his good friends, the goat-herds, safe and sound. He remained with them a fortnight, preaching, administering the sacraments, teaching, and exhorting. When he was ready to start for home, he resolved to sing a *Te Deum* pontifically, and mentioned it to the priest. But what was to be done? There were no Episcopal ornaments. All that could be placed at his disposal was a poor village sacristy, with a few worn damask chasubles, trimmed with cheap gold lace.

"Bah!" said the bishop; "announce the *Te Deum* in your sermon, for all that. It will come right in the end."

Inquiries were made in the surrounding churches; but all the magnificence of these humble parishes united would not have been sufficient to decently equip a cathedral chorister. While they were in this embarrassment, a large chest was brought and left at the priest's house for the bishop by two strange horsemen, who started off again at once. The chest was opened and found to contain a cope of cloth of gold, a mitre adorned with diamonds, an archbishop's cross, a magnificent crozier, and all the pontifical robes stolen a month back from the treasury of our Lady of Embrun. In the chest was a paper on which was written these words: "*Cravatte to Monseigneur Bienvenu.*"

"Did I not tell you that it would be all right?" the bishop said. Then he added, with a smile, "Heaven sends

an archbishop's cope to a man who is content with a priest's surplice."

"My lord," the priest muttered, with a gentle shake of his head, "Heaven or — the devil."

The bishop looked fixedly at the priest and repeated authoritatively, "Heaven!"

When he returned to Chastelar, and all along the road, he was regarded curiously. He found at the presbytery of that town Mlle. Baptistine and Madame Magloire waiting for him, and he said to his sister, "Well, was I right? The poor priest went among those poor mountaineers with empty hands, and returns with his hands full. I set forth, taking with me only my trust in Heaven, and I bring back the treasures of a cathedral."

The same evening, before he went to bed, he said, "Never let us fear robbers or murderers. These are external and small dangers; let us fear ourselves; prejudices are the real robbers, vices the true murderers. The great dangers are within ourselves. Let us not trouble about what threatens our head or purse, and think only of what threatens our soul." Then, turning to his sister, he added, "Sister, a priest ought never to take precautions against his neighbour. What his neighbour does God permits; so let us confine ourselves to praying to God when we believe that a danger is impending over us. Let us pray, not for ourselves, but that our brother may not fall into error on our account."

Events, however, were rare in his existence. We relate those we know, but ordinarily he spent his life in doing the same things at the same moment. A month of his year resembled an hour of his day. As to what became of the treasure of Embrun cathedral, we should be greatly embarrassed if questioned on that head. There were many fine things, very tempting, and well adapted to be stolen for the benefit of the unfortunate. Stolen they were already; one half of the adventure was accomplished; the only thing left to be done was to change the direction of the robbery, and divert it toward the poor. Still, we affirm

nothing on the subject; only among the bishop's papers a rather obscure note was found, which probably refers to this affair, and was thus conceived: "The question is to know whether it ought to go to the cathedral or the hospital."

CHAPTER VIII

PHILOSOPHY AFTER DRINKING

THE senator, to whom we have already alluded, was a clever man, who had made his way with a rectitude heedless of all those things which constitute obstacles, and which are called conscience, plighted word, right and duty; he had gone straight to his object without once swerving from the line of his promotion and his interest. He was an ex-attorney, softened by success, anything but a bad man, doing all the little services in his power for his sons, his sons-in-law, his relatives, and even his friends; he had wisely seized upon the best opportunities, the best sides, and the best windfalls in life, and the rest seemed to him very stupid. He was witty, and just sufficiently educated to believe himself a disciple of Epicurus, while probably only a product of Pigault Lebrun. He was fond of laughing pleasantly at things infinite and eternal, and at the crotchets "of our worthy bishop." He even laughed at them with amiable authority in M. Myriel's presence. On some semi-official occasion the Count—— (this senator) and M. Myriel met at the prefect's table. At dessert the senator, who was somewhat merry but quite dignified, said:—

"Come, bishop, let us have a chat. A senator and a bishop can hardly meet without winking at each other, for we are two augurs; and I have a confession to make to you. I have my system of philosophy."

"And you are right," the bishop answered; "as we make

our philosophy, so we must lie on it. You are on the bed of purple."

The senator, thus encouraged, continued,—“Let us be candid.”

“Decidedly.”

“I declare to you,” the senator went on, “that the Marquis d’Argens, Pyrrho, Hobbes, and Naigeon are no impostors. I have all my philosophers in my library, with gilt backs.”

“Like yourself, count,” the bishop interrupted.

The senator proceeded:—

“I hate Diderot; he is an ideologist, a declaimer, and a revolutionist, believing in his heart in Deity, and more bigoted than Voltaire. Voltaire ridiculed Needham, and he was wrong; for Needham’s eels prove that God is unnecessary. A drop of vinegar in a spoonful of flour supplies the *fiat lux*; suppose the drop larger, and the spoonful bigger, and you have the world. Man is the eel: then of what use is the Eternal Father? My dear bishop, the Jehovah hypothesis bores me; it is good for nothing but to produce shallow people whose reasoning is hollow. Down with the great All, which annoys me! Long live Zeno, who leaves me at peace! Between ourselves, and to confess to my pastor, as is right and proper, I confess that I possess common sense. I am not wild about your Saviour, who is forever preaching abnegation and sacrifice. It is the advice of a miser to beggars. Abnegation, why? Sacrifice, to what end? I do not see that one wolf sacrifices itself for the happiness of another wolf. Let us, therefore, stick to nature. We are at the top, so let us have the supreme philosophy. What is the use of being at the top, if you cannot see further than the end of other people’s noses? Let us live gayly, for life is all in all. As for man having a future elsewhere, above, below, anywhere, I do not believe a syllable of it. Oh, yes! recommend sacrifices and abnegation to me. I must take heed to all I do. I must rack my brains about good and evil, justice and injustice, *fas et nefas*. Why so? Because I shall

have to account for my actions. When? After death. What a fine dream,—after death! He will be a clever fellow who catches me. Just think of a lump of ashes seized by the hand of a shadow. Let us speak the truth, we who are initiated and have raised the veil of Isis; there is no good, no evil, but there is vegetation. Let us seek reality and go to the root of the matter. Hang it all! we must scent out the truth, dig into the ground for it and seize it. Then it offers exquisite delights; then you grow strong and laugh. I am square at the base, my dear bishop; and the immortality of man is a thing to which anybody who likes may listen. Oh, what a charming prospect! What a fine billet Adam has! You are a soul; you will be an angel, and have blue wings on your shoulder-blades. Come, help me; is it not Tertullian who says that the blessed will go from one planet to the other? Very good; they will be the grasshoppers of the planets. And then they will see God. Ta, ta, ta! These paradises are all nonsense, and God is a monstrous fable. I would not say so in the ‘Moniteur,’ of course, but I whisper it between friends, *inter pocula*. To sacrifice the world for paradise is to give up the substance for the shadow. I am not such an ass as to be the dupe of the Infinite. I am nothing; my name is Count Nothing, Senator. Did I exist before my birth? No. Shall I exist after my death? No. What am I? A little dust aggregated by an organism. What have I to do on this earth? I have the choice between suffering and enjoyment. To what will suffering lead me? To nothingness, but I shall have suffered. To what will enjoyment lead me? To nothingness, but I shall have enjoyed. My choice is made. A man must either eat or be eaten; and so I eat, for it is better to be the tooth than the grass. That is my wisdom; after which, go on as I impel you; the grave-digger is there, the Pantheon for such as us, and all fall into the great hole. *Finis*, and total liquidation, that is the vanishing point. Death is dead, take my word for it; and I laugh at the idea of any one present having anything to tell me on that subject. It is a

nurse's story,—bugaboo for children, Jehovah for men. No, our morrow is night; behind the tomb there is nothing but equal nothingness. You may have been Sardanapalus, you may have been Saint Vincent de Paul, but it all comes to the same thing. That is the truth, so live your life, above all else. Make use of your *ego*, so long as you hold it. In truth, I tell you, my dear bishop, I have my philosophy, and I have my philosophers, and I do not let myself be deluded by fables. After all, something must be offered to those who are down in the world,—the barefooted, the needy knife-grinders, and the wretched; and so we give them legends, chimeras, the soul, immortality, paradise, the stars, to swallow. They chew that and put it on their dry bread. The man who has nothing has God, and that is something, at any rate. I do not oppose it, but I keep M. Naigeon for myself; God is good for the people."

The bishop clapped his hands.

"That is what I call talking," he exclaimed. "Ah, what an excellent and truly wonderful thing this materialism is! It is not every man who wishes that can have it. Ah! when a man has reached that point, he is no longer a dupe; he does not let himself be stupidly exiled, like Cato; or stoned, like Saint Stephen; or burned, like Joan of Arc. Those who succeed in acquiring this materialism have the joy of feeling themselves irresponsible, and of thinking that they can devour everything without anxiety,—places, sinecures, power well or ill gained, dignities, lucrative contradictions, useful treachery, folly, savoury capitulations of conscience, and that they will go down to the tomb with their digestion accomplished. How agreeable this is! I am not referring to you, my dear senator, still I cannot refrain from congratulating you. You great gentlemen have, as you say, a philosophy of your own, and for yourselves,—exquisite, refined, accessible to the rich alone, good with any sauce, and admirably seasoning the joys of life. This philosophy is drawn from the depths, and dug up by special searchers. But you are amiable princes, and think it no harm that belief in God should be

the philosophy of the populace, much in the same way as a goose stuffed with chestnuts is the truffled turkey of the poor."

CHAPTER IX

THE BROTHER DESCRIBED BY THE SISTER

TO give an idea of the domestic life of the bishop of D——, and the way in which these two saintly women subordinated their actions, their thoughts, even their feminine instincts, which were easily startled, to the habits and intentions of the bishop, even before he expressed them in words, we cannot do better than copy here a letter from Mlle. Baptistine to the Vicomtesse de Boischevron, her friend from childhood. This letter is in our possession.

D——, 16th Dec., 18—.

MY DEAR MADAME,—Not a day passes in which we do not talk about you. That is our regular custom, but there is an extra reason at present. Just imagine that, while washing and dusting the ceilings and walls, Madame Magloire made a discovery, and now our two rooms papered with old whitewashed paper would not disgrace a castle like yours. Madame Magloire has torn off all the paper, and there are things under it. My sitting-room, in which there was no furniture, and in which we used to hang the clothes to dry, is fifteen feet high, eighteen wide, and has a ceiling which was once painted and gilded, and rafters as in your house. It was covered with canvas when this house was an hospital. But you should see my bedroom; Madame Magloire has discovered, under at least ten layers of paper, paintings which, though not very good, are tolerable. The subject is Telemachus being knighted by Minerva, and again in the gardens,—I forget their names, but where the Roman ladies only went for a single night. How can I tell you? I have Romans and Roman ladies [here an illegible word], and the whole train. Madame Magloire has cleaned it all off. This summer she intends to repair a little damage, revarnish it all, and my bedroom will be a real museum. She has also found in a corner of the garret two old-fashioned wooden pier-tables. They want twelve francs to regild them, but it is better to give that sum to the poor; besides, they are frightfully ugly, and I should prefer a round mahogany table.

I am very happy, for my brother is so good; he gives all he has to

the sick and the poor, and we are often badly off. The country is hard in winter, and something must be done for those who are in want. We are pretty well lighted and warmed; and, as you can see, that is a great comfort. My brother has peculiar habits; when he does talk, he says "that a bishop should be so." Just imagine that the house door is never locked: any one who likes can come in, and is at once in my brother's room. He fears nothing, not even at night; and he says that is his sort of bravery. He does not wish me or Madame Magloire to feel alarmed for him; he exposes himself to all kinds of dangers, and does not wish us to appear even to notice it. You must know him to understand him. He goes out in the rain, he wades through the water, and travels in winter. He is not afraid of darkness, suspicious roads, or encounters. Last year he went all alone into a country of robbers, for he would not take us with him. He stayed away a whole fortnight, and folk thought him dead, but he came back all right, and said, "Here's the way in which I was robbed," and he opened a chest full of the treasures of Embrun cathedral, which the robbers had given him. That time I could not refrain from scolding him a little, but was careful only to speak when the wheels made a noise, so that no one could hear me.

At first I said to myself, "There is no danger that checks him, and it is terrible;" but now I have grown accustomed to it. I make Madame Magloire a sign not to oppose him, and he risks his life as he pleases. I carry off Magloire, go to my bedroom, pray for him, and fall asleep. I am easy because I know that if any harm happened to him it would be the death of me. I shall go to heaven with my brother and my bishop. Madame Magloire had greater difficulty than myself in accustoming herself to what she calls his imprudence, but now she has learned to put up with it. We both pray; we are terrified together, and fall asleep. If the foul Fiend were to enter the house, no one would try to stop him, and after all, what have we to fear in this house? There is always some one with us Who is stronger than we; the demon may pass through, but our Lord dwells in it. That is enough for me, and my brother no longer has to say a word to me. I understand him without his speaking, and we leave ourselves in the hands of Providence, for that is the way in which you must behave to a man who has grandeur of soul.

I have asked my brother about the information you wish concerning the De Faux family. You are aware that he knows everything, and what a memory he has, for he is still a good royalist. It is really a very old Norman family belonging to the generalship of Caen. Five hundred years ago there were a Raoul, a Jean, and a Thomas de Faux, who were gentlemen, and one of them lord of Rochefort. The last was Guy Etienne Alexandre, who was major-general, and something in the Brittany Light Horse: his daughter, Maria Louisa, married Adrian Charles de Gramont, son of Duke Louis de Gramont, peer of France, colonel of the French guards, and lieutenant-general in the army. The name is written Faux, Faug, and Faouq.

My dear madame, recommend us to the prayers of your holy relative, the cardinal. As for your dear Sylvanie, she does well not to waste the few moments she passes by your side in writing to me. She is well, works according to your wishes, and loves me still; that is all I

desire. Her gift sent through you reached me safely, and I am delighted with it. My health is not bad, and yet I grow thinner every day. Good-by, my paper is running out and compels me to break off. A thousand kind regards from your

BAPTISTINE.

P. S. Your little nephew is delightful: do you know that he is nearly five years of age? Yesterday he saw a horse pass with knee-caps on, and he said, "What has he got on his knees?" He is such a dear child. His little brother drags an old broom about the room like a coach, and cries, "Hi, hi!"

As may be seen from this letter, the two women managed to fall in with the bishop's ways, with the genius peculiar to woman, who comprehends man better than he does himself. The bishop of D—— beneath the candid, gentle air which never failed him, at times did grand, bold, and magnificent things, without even appearing to suspect the fact. They trembled, but let him alone. At times Madame Magloire would hazard a remonstrance beforehand, but never during or after the deed. They never troubled him either by word or sign when he had once begun an affair. At certain moments, without his mentioning the fact, or perhaps when he was not conscious of it, so perfect was his simplicity, they vaguely felt that he was acting episcopally, and at such times they were only two shadows in the house. They served him passively, and if obedience consisted in disappearing, they disappeared. They knew, with admirable intuitive delicacy, that certain attentions might vex him, and hence, though they might believe him in peril, they understood, I will not say his thoughts, but his nature, and no longer watched over him. They intrusted him to God. Moreover, Baptistine said, as we have just read, that her brother's death would be her death. Madame Magloire did not say so, but she knew it.

CHAPTER X

THE BISHOP FACES A STRANGE LIGHT

AT a period rather later than the date of the letter just quoted, he did a thing which the whole town declared to be even more venturesome than his trip in the mountains among the bandits. A man lived alone in the country near D——. This man—let us out with the great word at once!—was an ex-Conventionalist, of the name of G——. People talked about him in the little world of D—— with a species of horror. A Conventionalist, only think of that! Those men existed at the time when people “thou-ed” one another and were called citizens. This man was almost a monster; he had not voted for the king’s death, but had done all but that, and was a quasi-regicide. How was it that this man had not been tried by court-martial, on the return of the legitimate princes? They need not have cut his head off, for clemency is all right and proper, but banishment for life would have made an example of him, and so on. Moreover, he was an atheist, like all those men. It was the gossip of geese around a vulture.

And was this G—— a vulture? Yes, if he might be judged by the element of ferocity in his solitude. As he had not voted for the king’s death, he was not included in the decree of exile, and was able to remain in France. He lived about three miles from the town, far from any village, any road, in a nook of a very wild valley. He had there, so it was said, a field, a hut, a den. He had no neighbours, not even passers-by; since he had lived in the valley the path leading to it had become overgrown with grass. People talked of the spot as of the hangman’s house. Yet the bishop thought of it, and from time to time gazed at a spot on the horizon where a clump of trees marked the old Con-

ventionalist's valley and said, "There is a lonely soul there;" and he added in his own heart, "I owe him a visit."

But, let us confess it, this idea, at the first blush quite natural, after a moment's reflection seemed strange and impossible, almost repulsive. For in his heart he shared the general impression, and the Conventionalist insensibly inspired him, with that feeling which borders on hate, and which is so well expressed by the word aversion.

Still the shepherd should not shun a scabby sheep; but, then, what a sheep! The good bishop was perplexed; sometimes he started in that direction, but turned back. One day a rumour spread in the town that a young shepherd who waited on G—— in his den had come to fetch a doctor. The old villain was dying; paralysis had attacked him, and he could not last out the night. "Thank God!" some added.

The bishop took his stick, put on his cloak to hide his well-worn cassock, as well as to protect him against the evening breeze which would soon blow, and set forth. The sun had almost touched the horizon when the bishop reached the excommunicated spot. He saw with a certain beating of the heart that he was close to the wild beast's den. He strode across a ditch, clambered over a hedge, entered a neglected garden, and suddenly perceived the cavern behind some brambles. It was a low, poor-looking hut, small and clean, with a vine nailed over the front.

Before the door a white-haired old man, seated in a shabby wheel-chair, was smiling in the sun. By his side stood the shepherd-boy, who handed him a pot of milk. While the bishop was looking at him the old man spoke. "Thanks," he said, "I want nothing more," and his smiling face was turned from the sun to the boy.

The bishop stepped forward, and at the sound of his footsteps the man turned his head, and his face expressed as much surprise as it is possible to feel at the close of a long life.

"You are the first person who has come to see me since I have lived here," he said. "Who may you be, sir?"

The bishop answered, "My name is Bienvenu Myriel."

"I have heard that name. Are you not he whom the peasants call my Lord Welcome?"

"I am."

The old man continued, with a half-smile, "Then you are my bishop?"

"Yes."

"Come in, sir."

The Conventionalist offered his hand to the bishop, but the bishop did not take it; he merely said,—

"I am pleased to see that I was misinformed. You certainly do not look ill."

"I shall soon be cured, sir," said the old man; then after a pause he added, "I shall die in three hours. I am a bit of a physician, and know in what way the last hour comes. Yesterday, only my feet were cold; to-day the chill reached my knees; now I can feel it ascending to my waist, and when it reaches the heart, I shall stop. The sun is glorious, is it not? I had myself wheeled out here to take a farewell glance at things. You can talk to me, for it does not weary me. You have done well to come and look at a dying man, for it is proper that there should be witnesses. People have their fancies; and I should have liked to last till dawn. But I know that I can hardly live three hours. It will be night; but, after all, what matter? Dying is a simple affair, and does not require daylight. Be it so; I will die by starlight."

Then he turned to the lad:—

"Go to bed. You sat up last night, and must be tired."

The boy went into the cabin; the old man followed him with his eyes, and added, as if speaking to himself:—

"While he sleeps I shall die; the two slumbers can keep each other company."

The bishop was not so moved as we might imagine he would be. He did not think that he saw God in this way of dying; and — let us out with it, as the small contradictions of great hearts must also be revealed — he, who at

times laughed so heartily at his grandeur, was somewhat annoyed at not being called my lord, and was almost tempted to retort, citizen. He felt an inclination for coarse familiarity, common enough to doctors and priests, but to which he was not accustomed. This man, after all, this Conventionalist, this representative of the people, had been a mighty one of the earth; for the first time in his life, perhaps, the bishop felt disposed to sternness.

The republican, in the mean while, regarded him with modest cordiality, in which, perhaps, could be traced that humility which is so becoming in a man who is on the point of returning to the dust.

The bishop, on his side, though he generally guarded against curiosity, which according to him was akin to insult, could not refrain from examining the Conventionalist with an attention which, as it did not emanate from sympathy, would have pricked his conscience in the case of any other man. The Conventionalist produced the effect upon him of being beyond the pale of the law, even the law of charity. G——, calm, almost upright, and possessing a sonorous voice, was one of those grand octogenarians who are the amazement of the physiologist. The Revolution possessed many such men, proportioned to the age. This man seemed ready to submit to any proof, and, though so near his end, he retained all the signs of health. There was something calculated to disconcert death in his clear glance, his firm tone, and the robust movement of his shoulders. Azrael, the Mohammedan angel of the tomb, would have turned back, fancying that he had mistaken the door. G—— seemed to be dying because he wished to do so; there was freedom in his agony; and his legs alone, by which the shadows clutched him, were motionless. While the feet were dead and cold, the head lived with all the power of life, and appeared in full light. G—— at this awful moment resembled the king in the Oriental legend,—flesh above and marble below. The bishop sat down on a stone and began, rather abruptly:—

"I congratulate you," he said, in a tone of reprimand; "*at least* you did not vote the king's death."

The republican did not seem to notice the covert bitterness of the words, *at least*; he replied, without a smile:

"Do not congratulate me, sir; I voted the death of the tyrant." It was the accent of austerity opposed to that of sternness.

"What do you mean?" replied the bishop.

"I mean that man has a tyrant,—Ignorance; and I voted for the death of that tyrant which engendered royalty, which is false authority, while knowledge is true authority. Man must be governed by knowledge only."

"And by his conscience," the bishop added.

"That is the same thing. Conscience is the amount of innate knowledge which we have."

Monseigneur Bienvenu listened in some surprise to this language, which was very novel to him. The republican continued:—

"As for Louis XVI., I said, 'No.' I do not believe that I have the right to kill a man, but I feel it my duty to exterminate a tyrant; and I voted for the death of the tyrant,—that is to say, to put an end to the prostitution of women; an end to the slavery of men; and an end to night for children. In voting for the republic, I voted for all this: I voted for fraternity, concord, the Dawn! I aided in the overthrow of errors and prejudices; and such an overthrow produces light. We hurled down the old world; and the old world, that vessel of wretchedness, being poured over the human race, became an urn of joy."

"Mingled joy," said the bishop.

"You might call it troubled joy; and now, after that fatal return of the past, which is called 1814, a departed joy. Alas! the work was incomplete, I grant; we demolished the ancient rule in facts, but were not able to suppress it completely in ideas. It is not enough to destroy abuses, but morals must also be modified. Though the mill no longer exists, the wind still blows."

"You demolished; it may be useful, but I distrust a demolition complicated with passion."

"Right has its passion, sir; and that passion is an element of progress. No matter what may be said, the French Revolution is the most powerful step taken by the human race since the advent of Christ. It may be incomplete, but it was sublime. It softened spirits, it calmed, appeased, and enlightened, and it spread civilization over the world. The French Revolution was good, for it was the consecration of humanity."

The bishop could not refrain from muttering:—

"Yes? '93!"

The republican drew himself up with almost mournful solemnity, and shouted, as well as a dying man could shout:—

"Ah, there we have it! '93! I expected that. A cloud had been collecting for fifteen hundred years, and at the end of that period it burst; you condemn the thunder-bolt."

The bishop, without perhaps confessing it, felt that the blow had gone home; still he put a good face on the matter, and answered:—

"The judge speaks in the name of justice; the priest speaks in that of pity, which is only a higher form of justice. A thunder-bolt must not err."

And he added as he looked fixedly at the Conventionalist:—

"And Louis XVII.?"

The republican stretched forth his hand and seized the bishop's arm.

"Louis XVII. Let us consider. For whom do you weep? For the innocent child? In that case I weep with you. For the royal child? In that case I must ask leave to reflect. To me, the brother of Cartouche, an innocent lad hung up by the armpits in the Place de Grève until death ensued, for the sole crime of being Cartouche's brother, is no less painful than the grandson of Louis XV., the innocent boy martyred in the Temple Tower for the sole crime of being the grandson of Louis XV."

"I do not like such an association of names, sir," said the bishop.

"Louis XV.? Cartouche? On behalf of which do you protest?"

There was a moment's silence; the bishop almost regretted having come, and yet felt himself vaguely and strangely moved. The Conventionalist continued:—

"Ah! sir priest, you do not like the crudities of truth, but Christ loved them; he took a scourge and swept the temple. His lightning lash was a rough discourser of truths. When he exclaimed, 'Suffer little children to come unto me,' he made no distinction among them. He made no difference between the dauphin of Barabbas and the dauphin of Herod. Innocence is its own crown, and does not require to be a highness; it is as august in rags as when crowned with the lilies of France."

"That is true?" said the bishop in a low voice.

"You named Louis XVII.," the Conventionalist resumed; "let us understand each other. Shall we weep for all the innocents, martyrs, and children of the lowest as of the highest rank? I am with you there; but, as I said, in that case we must go back beyond '93, and our tears must begin before Louis XVII. I will weep over the children of kings with you, provided that you weep with me over the children of the people."

"I weep for all," said the bishop.

"Equally!" G—— exclaimed; "and if the balance must incline, let it be on the side of the people, as they have suffered longer."

There was again a silence, which the republican broke. He raised himself on his elbow, pinched his cheek between his thumb and forefinger, as a man does mechanically when he is interrogating and judging, and fixed on the bishop a gaze filled with the energy of approaching death. It was almost an explosion.

"Yes, sir; the people have been long-suffering. But let me ask why you come to question me about Louis XVII.?"

I do not know you. Ever since I have been in this country I have lived here alone, never setting my foot across the threshold, and seeing no one but the boy who serves me. Your name, it is true, has vaguely reached me, and I am bound to say that it was uttered with affection; but that means nothing, for clever people have so many ways of making worthy, simple folk believe in them. By the bye, I did not hear the sound of your coach; you doubtless left it behind that clump of trees at the cross-roads. I do not know you, I say; you tell me that you are the bishop, but that teaches me nothing as to your moral character. In a word, I repeat my question, who are you? You are a bishop; that is to say, a prince of the Church, one of those gilded, escutcheoned annuitants, who have fat prebends,—the bishopric of D—with fifteen thousand francs income, ten thousand francs in fees, or a total of twenty-five thousand francs,—who have kitchens, liveries, keep a good table, and eat water-fowl on Friday; who go about with lackeys before and behind, in a gilded coach; who have palaces and drive a carriage, in the name of the Saviour, who walked barefoot! You are a prelate; you have, like all the rest, income, palace, horses, valets, a good table, and, like the rest, you enjoy them. That is all very well, but it says either too much or too little; it does not enlighten me as to your intrinsic and essential value when you come with the probable intention of bringing me wisdom. To whom do I speak,—who are you?”

The bishop bowed his head, and answered, “I am a worm.”

“A worm in a carriage!” growled the republican.

It was his turn to be haughty, the bishop's to be humble; the latter continued gently:—

“Be it so, sir. But explain to me how my coach, which is a little way off behind the trees, my good table, and the water-fowl I eat on Friday, my palace, my income, and my footmen, prove that pity is not a virtue, that clemency is not a duty, and that '93 was not inexorable.”

The republican passed his hand over his forehead, as if to remove a cloud.

"Before answering you," he said, "I must ask you to forgive me. I was in the wrong, sir, for you are in my house and my guest. You discuss my ideas, and it becomes me to confine myself to combating your arguments. Your wealth and enjoyments are advantages which I have over you in the debate, but courtesy bids me not employ them. I promise not to do so again."

"I thank you," said the bishop.

G—— resumed: "Let us return to the explanation you asked of me. Where were we? What was it you said, that '93 was inexorable?"

"Yes, inexorable," the bishop said: "what do you think of Marat clapping his hands at the guillotine?"

"What do you think of Bossuet singing a Te Deum over the Dragonnades?"

The retort was harsh, but it went to its mark with the directness of a rapier. The bishop started, and could not parry it; but he was hurt by this way of mentioning Bossuet. The best minds have their fetishes, and at times feel vaguely wounded by any want of respect on the part of logic. The Conventionalist was beginning to gasp; that asthma which is mingled with the last breath affected his voice; still he retained perfect lucidity of soul in his eyes. He continued:—

"Let us say a few words more on this head. Aside from the Revolution, which, taken as a whole, is an immense human affirmation, '93, alas, is a rejoinder. You consider it inexorable, but what was the whole monarchy? Carrier is a bandit, but what name do you give to Montrevel? Fouquier Tainville is a scoundrel, but what is your opinion of Lamoignon-Bâville? Maillard is frightful, but what of Saulx-Tavannes, if you please? Father Duchêne is ferocious, but what epithet will you allow me for Père Letellier? Jourdan Coupe-Tête is a monster, but less so than the Marquis de Louvois. I pity Marie Antoinette, archduchess and queen; but I also pity the poor Huguenot woman who, in 1685, under Louis the Great, while suckling her child, was fastened, naked to the waist, to a stake, while her infant was held at a

distance. Her breast was swollen with milk, her heart with agony; the babe, hungry and pale, saw that breast and screamed for it, and the hangman said to the wife, mother, and nurse, 'Abjure!' giving her her choice between the death of her child and the death of her conscience. What do you say of this punishment of Tantalus applied to a woman? Remember this, sir, the French Revolution had its reasons, and its wrath will be absolved by the future. Its result is a better world; and a caress for the human race issues from its most terrible blows. I must stop, for the game is all in my favour, — besides, I am dying."

And ceasing to regard the bishop, the republican completed his thought with the following calm words:—

"Yes, the brutalities of progress are called revolutions, but when they are over, this fact is recognized: the human race has been chastised, but it has advanced."

The republican did not suspect that he had carried in turn every one of the bishop's inmost intrenchments. One still remained, however, and from this, the last resource of his resistance, came this remark, in which almost all the harshness of the beginning was apparent.

"Progress must believe in God; and the good cannot have impious servants. A man who is an atheist is a bad guide for the human race."

The ex-representative of the people did not reply. He trembled, looked up to heaven, and a tear slowly gathered in his eye. When the lid was full the tear ran down his livid cheek, and he said in a low, tremulous voice, as if to himself:—

"Oh, thou! oh, ideal! thou alone existest!"

The bishop felt an indescribable shock; after a pause the old man raised a finger to heaven, and said,—

"The infinite is. It is there. If the infinite had no ego, the ego would be its limit; it would not be infinite,—in other words, it would not exist. But it is. Hence it has an ego. This ego of the infinite is God."

The dying man uttered these words in a loud voice, and

with a shudder of ecstasy, as if he saw some one. When he had spoken, his eyes closed, for the effort had exhausted him. It was evident that he had lived in one minute the few hours left him. The supreme moment was at hand. The bishop understood it; he had come hither as a priest, and had gradually passed from extreme coldness to extreme emotion; he gazed at those closed eyes; he took the wrinkled, chilly hand and bent over the dying man.

“This hour is God’s. Would you not consider it matter of regret if we had met in vain?”

The republican opened his eyes; a gravity which suggested the shadow of death was imprinted on his countenance.

“Sir,” he said, with a slowness produced perhaps more by the dignity of his soul than by failing of his strength, “I have spent my life in meditation, contemplation, and study. I was sixty years of age when my country summoned me, and bade me busy myself with its affairs. I obeyed. There were abuses, and I combated them; tyranny, and I destroyed it; rights and principles, and I proclaimed and confessed them; our territory was invaded, and I defended it; France was menaced, and I offered her my breast. I was not rich, and I am poor. I was one of the masters of the State; the treasury vaults were so filled with specie that we were forced to shore up the walls, which were ready to burst beneath the weight of gold and silver, but I dined in the Rue de l’Arbre Sec, at two-and-twenty sous a head. I succoured the oppressed; I relieved the suffering. I tore up the altar-cloth, it is true; but it was to stanch the wounds of the country. I ever supported the onward march of the human race toward light, and I at times resisted pitiless progress. When opportunity served, I protected my adversaries,—men of your class. And there is at Peteghem in Flanders, on the same site where the Merovingian kings had their summer palace, a Monastery of Urbanists, the Abbey of St. Claire en Beaulieu, which I saved in 1793. I did my duty according to my strength, and what good I could. After which I was driven out, tracked, pursued, persecuted, maligned, mocked, spat upon, accursed, and pro-

scribed. For many years I, with my white hairs, have felt that many men believed they had a right to despise me. My face has been held accursed by the poor ignorant mob; and, while hating no one, I accepted the isolation of hatred. Now I am eighty-six, and on the point of death; what have you come to ask of me?"

"Your blessing!" said the bishop, and knelt down. When the bishop raised his head again, the Conventionalist's countenance had become august: he had expired. The bishop returned home absorbed in strange thoughts, and spent the whole night in prayer. On the morrow, the curious tried to make him talk about G—— the republican, but he only pointed to heaven. From this moment his tenderness and fraternity for the little ones and the suffering were redoubled.

Any allusion to "that old villain of a G——" threw him into a singular revery; no one could say that the passing of that spirit before his, and the reflection that great conscience cast upon his, had not something to do with his approach to perfection. This "pastoral visit" naturally created a stir among the small local coteries.

Was it a bishop's place to visit the death-bed of such a man? It was plain that he had no conversion to hope for, for all these revolutionists are backsliders! Then, why go! What was there to be seen? He must have been very anxious to see the devil carry off a soul.

One day a dowager, of the impertinent sort which believes itself witty, said to him: "Sir, people are asking when your Eminence will receive the red cap." "Oh, oh!" answered the bishop, "that is an ominous colour. Fortunately those who despise it in a cap venerate it in a hat."



"'Your blessing'" said the bishop, and knelt down. When the bishop raised his head again, the conventionalist—had expired."

Les Misérables. Fantine: Page 48.

CHAPTER XI

A RESTRICTION

WE should run a strong risk of making a mistake were we to conclude from this that Monseigneur Bienvenu was a "philosophical bishop," or "a patriotic priest." His meeting, which might almost be called his conjunction, with the Conventionalist G——, produced in him a sort of amazement, which made him more gentle than ever. That was all.

Though he was anything rather than a politician, this is perhaps the place to indicate briefly his attitude toward the events of that period, supposing that he had ever dreamed of having an attitude. We will, therefore, go back a few years. A short time after M. Myriel's elevation to the episcopate, the Emperor made him a baron, simultaneously with some other bishops. The arrest of the Pope took place, as is well known, on the night of July 5, 1809; at which time M. Myriel was called by Napoleon to the synod of French and Italian bishops convened at Paris. This synod was held at Notre-Dame, and assembled for the first time on June 15, 1811, under the presidency of Cardinal Fesch. M. Myriel was one of the ninety-five bishops convened, but he was only present at one session and three or four private conferences. As bishop of a mountain diocese, living so near to nature in rusticity and poverty, it seems that he introduced among these eminent personages ideas which changed the temperature of the assembly. He very soon went back to D——, and when questioned about this hurried return he replied, "I embarrassed them. The fresh air came in with me, and I produced the effect of an open door upon them." On another occasion he said, "What would you have? Those gentlemen are princes while I am only a poor peasant bishop."

The fact is, that he displeased them. Among other strange things he let slip the following remarks one evening when

he was visiting one of his most influential colleagues: "What fine clocks! What splendid carpets! What magnificent liveries! You must find all that very troublesome? Oh! I should not like to have such superfluities crying incessantly in my ears, 'There are people who are hungry; there are people who are cold; there are poor, there are poor!'"

Let us remark parenthetically that a hatred of luxury is not an intelligent hatred, for it implies a hatred of the arts. Still, in churchmen any luxury beyond that connected with their sacred office is wrong; for it seems to reveal habits which are not truly charitable. An opulent priest is a paradox, for he is bound to live with the poor. Now, can a man incessantly, both night and day, come in contact with distress, misfortune, and want, without having about him a little of that holy wretchedness, like the dust of toil? Can we imagine a man sitting close to a stove and not feeling hot? Can we imagine a workman constantly toiling at a furnace, and having neither a hair burned, a nail blackened, nor a drop of perspiration, nor a grain of soot on his face? The first proof of charity in a priest, in a bishop especially, is poverty. This was, doubtless, the opinion of the bishop of D——.

We must not suppose, however, that he shared what we might call the "ideas of the age" on certain delicate points. He took little part in the theological questions of the moment, and was silent in regard to points wherein Church and State are implicated; but, had he been greatly pressed, we fancy he would have been found to be ultramontane rather than Gallican. As we are drawing a portrait, and do not wish to conceal anything, we are forced to add that he was frigid toward Napoleon in his decline. From 1813, he gave his adherence to or applauded all hostile demonstrations; he refused to see him on his return from Elba, and abstained from ordering public prayers for the Emperor during the hundred days.

Beside his sister, Mlle. Baptistine, he had two brothers, one a general, the other a prefect. He wrote rather frequently to both of them. For some time he owed the former

a grudge, because the general, who at the time of the landing at Cannes held a command in Provence, put himself at the head of twelve hundred men and pursued the Emperor as if he wished to let him escape. His correspondence with the other brother, the ex-prefect, a worthy, honest man, who lived quietly at Paris, was more affectionate.

Monseigneur Bienvenu, therefore, also had his hour of partisan spirit, his hour of bitterness, his cloud. The shadow of the passions of the moment fell athwart this great and gentle mind, which was occupied by things eternal. Certainly, such a man would have done well to have no political opinions. Pray let there be no mistake as to our meaning; we do not confound what are called "political opinions" with grand aspirations for progress,—with that sublime patriotic, democratic and human faith which in our days must be the foundation of all generous intelligence. Without entering into questions which only indirectly affect the subject of this book, we say it would have been better had Monseigneur Bienvenu not been a royalist, and if his eye had not turned away, even for a moment, from that serene contemplation in which the three pure lights of Truth, Justice, and Charity are seen beaming above the fictions and hatreds of this world, and above the stormy ebb and flow of human affairs.

While allowing that God had not created Monseigneur Bienvenu for political functions, we could have understood and admired a protest in the name of justice and liberty, a haughty opposition, and a perilous and just resistance to the omnipotent Napoleon. But conduct which pleases us toward those who are rising, pleases us less toward those who are falling. We only like the contest so long as there is danger; and, in any case, the combatants of the first alone have a right to be the exterminators of the last. A man who has not been an obstinate accuser in prosperity must be silent when the crash comes; the denouncer of success is the sole legitimate judge of the fall. For our part, when Providence intervenes and strikes, we let it work. 1812 begins to disarm us. In 1813 the cowardly rupture of silence by the taciturn legis-

lative corps, emboldened by catastrophes, could only arouse indignation; it was wrong to applaud it. In 1814, in the presence of the traitor marshals, in the presence of that senate, which passed from one atrocity to another, insulting after deifying, and at the sight of idolaters deserting and spitting on their idol, it was a duty to turn aside one's head. In 1815, as supreme disasters were in the air, when France shuddered at their sinister approach, when Waterloo, already opening before Napoleon, could be vaguely distinguished, the mournful acclamation awarded by the army and the people to the man condemned by destiny had nothing laughable about it, and — leaving the despot out of the question — a heart like the bishop of D——'s should have understood the august and affecting features in this close embrace between a great nation and a great man on the verge of an abyss.

With this exception, the bishop was in all things just, true, equitable, intelligent, humble, and dignified; beneficent and benevolent, which is another form of beneficence. He was a priest, a sage, and a man. Even in the political opinions with which we have reproached him, and which we are inclined to judge almost severely, we are bound to add that he was tolerant and facile,—more so perhaps than the writer of these lines. The porter of the Town Hall had been appointed by the Emperor; he was an ex-non-commissioned officer of the old guard, a legionary of Austerlitz, and as Bonapartist as the eagle. This poor fellow now and then made thoughtless remarks, which the law of that day qualified as seditious. From the moment that the Imperial profile disappeared from the Legion of Honour, he never put on his uniform, that he might not be obliged to bear his cross, as he said. He had himself devoutly removed the Imperial effigy from the cross which Napoleon had given him with his own hands, and, though this made a hole, he would not put anything in its place. "Sooner die," he would say, "than wear three toads on my heart." He was fond of ridiculing Louis XVIII. aloud. "The gouty old fellow with his English gaiters, let him be off to Prussia with that queue of his." It delighted him thus to combine

in one imprecation the two things he hated most,— England and Prussia. He went on thus till he lost his place, and then he was left to starve in the street with wife and children. The bishop sent for him, gave him a gentle lecture, and made him beadle in the cathedral.

In nine years, by dint of his good deeds and gentle manners, Monseigneur Bienvenu had filled the town of D—— with a sort of tender and filial reverence. Even his conduct to Napoleon was accepted, and, as it were, tacitly pardoned, by the people,— a good, but weakly flock of sheep, who adored their Emperor, but loved their bishop.

CHAPTER XII

MONSEIGNEUR BIENVENU'S SOLITUDE

A BISHOP is nearly always surrounded by a squadron of little priests, as a general is by a swarm of young officers. They are what that delightful Saint Francis de Sales calls somewhere "callow priests." Every career has its aspirants, who follow in the train of those who have reached the goal; there is no power without its following, no fortune without its court,— the seekers for a future buzz around the splendid present. Every metropolitan has his staff; every bishop who has any influence has his patrol of Seminarist Cherubim, who go the rounds, maintain order in the episcopal palace, and mount guard round my lord's smile. Pleasing a bishop is a foot in the stirrup for a subdiaconate; after all, a man must make his way, and apostles do not despise a canonry.

Just as there are "big-wigs," elsewhere, there are mitres in the Church. They are the bishops who stand well at court, who are rich, well endowed, clever, favourites of society, who doubtless know how to pray, but also how to beg, not scrupu-

lous about making a whole diocese dance attendance on them, connecting links between the sacristy and diplomacy, who are abbés rather than priests, prelates rather than bishops. Happy the man who approaches them! As they stand in good credit, they shower around them, on the assiduous and the favoured, and on all the youth who know the art of pleasing, fat livings, prebendaries, archdeaconries, chaplaincies, and cathedral appointments, while awaiting Episcopal honours. While themselves advancing, they cause their satellites to progress also, and it is an entire solar system moving onward. Their beams throw a purple hue over their followers, and their prosperity is showered over the actors behind the scenes in nice little bits of promotion. The larger the patron's diocese, the larger is the cure the favourite obtains. And then there is Rome. A bishop who contrives to become an archbishop, an archbishop who manages to become a cardinal, takes you with him as Conclavist; you enter the court of papal jurisdiction, you receive the pallium, you are auditor, papal chamberlain, monsignore; and from highness to eminence there is but a step, and between eminence and holiness there is only the smoke of a ballot. Every cassock may dream of the tiara. In our day the priest is the only man who can regularly become a king, and what a king! The supreme king! Hence what a hotbed of longings is a seminary! How many blushing choristers, how many youthful priests, have on their head Perrette's pot of milk! How easy it is for ambition to call itself vocation! and perhaps it does so in good faith and in self-deception, devotee that it is.

Monseigneur Bienvenu, humble, poor, and out of the world, was not counted among the big mitres. This was plain from the utter absence of young priests around him. We have seen that "he did not take" in Paris, and not an aspirant tried to graft himself on this solitary old man; no budding ambition tried to put forth leaves in his shade. His canons and vicars were good old men, somewhat plebeian like him, walled up like him in this diocese which had no issue to the cardinal's hat, and who resembled their bishop with this difference, that

they were done for while he was complete. The impossibility of growing great near Monseigneur Bienvenu was so well understood, that the young men whom he ordained at once obtained letters commendatory to the archbishop of Aix, or Auch, and went off at score. For, after all, we repeat, men wish to be pushed. A saint who lives in a state of excessive self-denial is a dangerous neighbour. He might possibly communicate to you by contagion an incurable poverty, a stiffening of those joints which are useful for advancement, and, in a word, more renunciation than you care for; and such infectious virtue is shunned. Hence came the isolation of Monseigneur Bienvenu. We live in the midst of a gloomy society; success,—such is the lesson which falls drop by drop from the corruption that overhangs us.

Be it said in passing, success is a very hideous thing, and its feigned resemblance to merit deceives men. For the common herd, success has almost the same profile as supremacy. Success, that Menæchmus of talent, has one dupe: history. Tacitus and Juvenal alone grumble at it. In our days a philosophy which is almost official has entered the service of success, wears its livery, and waits in its antechamber. Succeed,—that is the theory; for prosperity presupposes capacity. Win in the lottery and you are a clever man, for he who triumphs is revered. All you want is to be born under a fortunate star. Have luck and you will have the rest; be fortunate and you will be thought a great man. Leaving out five or six immense exceptions, which form the lustre of an age, contemporary admiration is nothing but short sightedness. Gilding is gold; and it does you no harm to be the first comer, so long as you do come. The mob is an antiquated Narcissus, who adores himself and applauds the mob. That enormous ability by virtue of which a man is a Moses, Æschylus, Dante, Michael Angelo, or Napoleon, the multitude decrees broadcast and by acclamation to any one who attains his object, no matter what it may be. Let a notary transform himself into a deputy; a false Corneille produce Tiridates; a eunuch contrive to possess a harem; a military Prudhomme acci-

dentally gain the decisive battle of an age; an apothecary invent cardboard soles for the army of the Sambre and Meuse, and make out of the cardboard, sold for leather, an income of four hundred thousand francs a year; a pedler espouse usury, and put it to bed with seven or eight millions, of which he is the father and she the mother; a preacher become a bishop by his nasal twang; let the steward of a good family be so rich on leaving service that he is made chancellor of the exchequer,—and men will call it genius, just as they call Mousqueton's face beauty and Claude's muscles majesty. They confound the stars which the duck's feet make in the soft mud of the puddle with the constellations of profundity.

CHAPTER XIII

WHAT HE BELIEVED

IT is not our business to gauge the bishop of D—— from an orthodox point of view. In the presence of such a soul we only feel inclined to respect. The conscience of the just man must be accepted on his word; besides, certain natures granted, we admit the possibility of the development of all the beauties of human virtue in a creed differing from our own. What did he think of this dogma or that mystery? These heart-secrets are known only to the tomb, which souls enter in a state of nudity. What we are certain of is, that the difficulties of faith were never resolved into hypocrisy with him. It is impossible for the diamond to decay. He believed as much as he possibly could, and would frequently exclaim, "I believe in the Father." He also derived from his good deeds that amount of satisfaction which suffices the conscience, and which whispers to a man, "You are with God."

What we think it our duty to note, is that, outside and

beyond his faith, he had an excess of love. It was through this, "because he loved much," that he was considered vulnerable by "serious men," "grave persons," and "rational people," those favourite phrases of our sad world, in which selfishness is under the guidance of pedantry. What was this excess of love? It was a serene benevolence, spreading over men, as we have already indicated, and on occasion extending even to things. He lived without disdain, and was indulgent to God's creation. Every man, even the best, has within him an unreflecting harshness, which he reserves for animals; but the bishop of D—— had not this harshness, which is, however, peculiar to many priests. He did not go so far as the Brahmin, but seemed to have meditated on the words of Ecclesiastes, "Who knoweth whither the soul of the animal goeth?" An ugly appearance, instinctive deformity, did not trouble him or make him angry; he was moved, almost softened, by it. It seemed as if he thoughtfully sought, beyond apparent life, for the cause, the explanation, or the excuse. He seemed at times to be asking God to commute these penalties. He examined without anger, and with the eye of a linguist deciphering a palimpsest, the amount of chaos which still exists in nature. This revery at times caused him to utter strange remarks. One morning he was in his garden and fancied himself alone; but his sister was walking behind, unseen by him. He stopped and looked at something on the ground. It was a large, black, hairy, horrible spider. His sister heard him utter, "Poor brute, it is not thy fault." Why should we not repeat these almost divinely childish sayings of goodness? They may be puerile, but of such were the sublime puerilities of Saint Francis of Assisi and Marcus Aurelius. One day he sprained his ankle because he did not wish to crush an ant.

Such was the way in which this just man lived. At times he fell asleep in his garden, and then nothing could be more venerable. Monseigneur Bienvenu was formerly, if we may believe the stories about his youth and even his manhood, a passionate, perhaps violent, man. His universal suavity was

less a natural instinct than the result of a strong conviction, which had filtered through the medium of life into his heart and slowly dropped into it thought by thought; for in a character, as in a rock, there may be water-holes. Such hollows, however, are ineffaceable, such formations indestructible. In 1815, as we think we have said, he reached his seventy-fifth year, but did not seem more than sixty. He was not tall, and had a tendency to stoutness, which he strove to combat by long walks; his step was firm, and he was but very slightly bent. But these are details from which we will not attempt to draw any conclusion, for Gregory XVI. at the age of eighty was erect and smiling, which did not prevent him from being a bad bishop. Monseigneur Bienvenu had what people call "a fine head," but he was so amiable that his beauty was forgotten. When he talked with that infantile gayety which was one of his graces, you felt at your ease by his side, and joy seemed to emanate from his whole person. His fresh, ruddy complexion, and all his white teeth, which he had preserved, and displayed when he laughed, gave him that open, facile air which makes you say of a man, "He is a good fellow," and of an aged man, "He is a fine man." That, it will be remembered, was the effect he produced on Napoleon. At the first glance, and when you saw him for the first time, he was in reality only a fine man; but if you remained some hours in his company, and saw him absorbed in thought, he became gradually transfigured and assumed an imposing air; his broad and serious brow, already august through the white hair, became also august through meditation; majesty was evolved from the goodness. Though the latter did not cease to gleam, you felt the same sort of emotion as you would if you saw a smiling angel slowly unfold his wings without ceasing to smile. An unutterable respect gradually penetrated you and mounted to your heart, and you felt that you had before you one of those powerful, long-tried, and indulgent souls whose thoughts are so great that they cannot but be gentle.

As we have seen, prayer, celebration of the Mass, alms-

giving, consoling the afflicted, tilling a patch of ground, fraternity, frugality, hospitality, self-denial, confidence, study, and work filled every day of his life. *Filled* is the exact word; and certainly the bishop's day was full of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. Still, it was not complete if cold or wet weather prevented him from spending an hour or two in the garden before going to bed and after the two women had retired. It seemed, as it were, a sort of rite of his to prepare himself for sleep by meditation, in the presence of the grand spectacle of the heavens by night. At times, even at an advanced hour, if the two women were not asleep, they heard him slowly pacing the walks. He was then alone with himself, contemplative, peaceful, adoring, comparing the serenity of his heart with that of the ether, affected in the darkness by the visible splendour of the constellations, and the invisible splendour of God, and opening his soul to thoughts which fall from the Unknown. At such moments, offering up his heart at the hour when nocturnal flowers offer up their perfumes, enkindled like a lamp amid the starry night, pouring himself out in ecstasy in the midst of the universal radiance of creation, he could not have said himself, possibly, what was passing in his mind; but he felt something take flight from him and something descend into him. Mysterious exchange of the abysses of the soul with the abysses of the universe!

He dreamed of the grandeur and presence of God; of future eternity, that strange mystery; of past eternity, that even stranger mystery; of all the infinities which buried themselves before his eyes in all directions; and, without seeking to comprehend the incomprehensible, he gazed upon it. He did not study God; he was dazzled by Him. He considered those magnificent conjunctions of atoms which reveal forces by verifying them, communicate aspects to matter, create individualities in unity, proportions in space, innumera-bility in the Infinite, and through light produce beauty. Such conjunctions incessantly take place, and are dissolved again incessantly, and hence come life and death.

He would sit down on a wooden bench with his back against a rickety trellis, and gaze at the stars through the stunted, sickly outlines of his fruit-trees. This quarter of an acre, so poorly planted, and so encumbered with mean sheds and outhouses, was dear to him, and was sufficient for him. What more was wanting to this aged man, who divided the leisure of his life, which knew so little leisure, between gardening by day and contemplation by night? Was not this narrow enclosure with the sky for its roof sufficient to enable him to adore God by turns in His most sublime works? Was not this everything, in fact? And what could be desired beyond? A small garden to walk about in, and immensity to dream in; at his feet, that which may be cultivated and gathered; over his head, that which may be studied and meditated; on the earth a few flowers, and all the stars in the heavens.

CHAPTER XIV

WHAT HE THOUGHT

ONE last word.

As these details might, especially at the present day, and to employ an expression which is now fashionable, give the bishop of D—— a certain “Panthestic” physiognomy, and cause it to be believed, either to his praise or blame, that he entertained one of those personal philosophies peculiar to our age, which sometimes germinate in solitary minds, and grow until they take the place of religion, we must lay stress on the fact that not one of the persons who knew Monseigneur Bienvenu would have believed himself authorized in thinking anything of the sort. What enlightened this man was his heart; and his wisdom was the product of the light which emanated from it.

He had no systems, but abundance of deeds. Abstruse

speculations contain vertigo, and nothing indicates that he ventured his mind amid the Apocalypses. The apostle may be bold, but the bishop must be timid. He probably would have scrupled to go too deep into certain problems reserved to some extent for great and terrible minds. There is a sacred horror beneath the portals of the enigma; the gloomy abyss gapes before you, but something tells you, a passer-by in life, that you must not enter: woe to the man who does so. Geniuses, in the impenetrable depths of abstraction and pure speculation, situated, so to speak, above dogmas, propose their ideas to God; their prayer audaciously offers discussion, and their adoration interrogates. This is direct religion, full of anxiety and responsibility for the man who attempts to carry the escarpment by storm.

Human meditation has no limits; at its own risk and peril it analyzes and produces its own bewilderment; we might almost say that, through a sort of splendid reaction, it bewilders nature with it. The mysterious world around us gives back what it receives; and it is probable that the contemplators are contemplated. However this may be there are in the world men — are they men? — who distinctly perceive on the horizon of dreamland the heights of the Absolute, and have the terrible vision of the mountain of the Infinite. Monseigneur Bienvenu was not one of these men, for he was not a genius. He would have feared these sublimities, from which even very great men like Swedenborg and Pascal have slipped into insanity. Assuredly, such powerful reveries have their moral utility, and by these arduous paths ideal perfection is approached; but he took a short cut,—the Gospel. He did not attempt to convert his chasuble into Elijah's cloak; he cast no beam of the future over the gloomy heaving of events; he did not seek to condense the light of things into flame; there was nothing of the prophet or the Magician about him. This humble soul loved, that was all.

It is probable that he carried prayer to the pitch of a superhuman aspiration; but a man can no more pray too much than he can love too much. And if it were a heresy to

pray further than the text, Saint Theresa and Saint Jerome would be heretics. He bent over all that groaned and all that expiated; the universe appeared to him an immense malady: he felt fever everywhere; he heard the sound of suffering all around him; and, without trying to solve the enigma, he sought to heal the wound. The dreadful spectacle of created things developed tenderness in him; he was solely engaged in finding for himself and arousing in others the best way to pity and relieve. Existence was to this good and rare priest a permanent subject of sorrow seeking to console.

There are some men who toil to extract gold, but he laboured to extract pity; universal wretchedness was his mine. Universal sorrow was only an opportunity for constant kindness. "Love one another," he declared to be complete; he wished for nothing more, and that was his entire doctrine. One day the senator, who believed himself a "philosopher," said to the bishop, "Just look at the spectacle of the world; all war against all, and the strongest is the cleverest. Your 'love one another' is nonsense." "Well," Monseigneur Bienvenu replied, without discussion, "if it be nonsense, the soul must shut itself up in it like the pearl in the oyster." He consequently shut himself up in it, lived in it, was absolutely satisfied with it, setting aside those prodigious questions which attract and terrify,—the unfathomable perspectives of the abstract, the precipices of metaphysics; all those depths which for the apostle converge in God, for the atheist in nothingness,—destiny, good and evil, the war of being against being, human consciousness, the pensive somnambulism of the animal, transformation through death, the recapitulation of existences which the grave contains, the incomprehensible grafting of successive loves on the persistent ego, essence, substance, the Nil and the Ens, the soul, nature, liberty, necessity;—in a word, he avoided all the gloomy precipices over which the gigantic archangels of the human mind bend, the formidable abysses which Lucretius, Menu, Saint Paul, and Dante contemplate with that flashing eye

which seems by its steady gaze on infinity to make stars blaze forth there.

Monseigneur Bienvenu was simply a man who accepted mysterious questions without scrutinizing, without disturbing them, or troubling his own mind, and who had in his soul a grave respect for the shadow.

BOOK II

THE FALL

CHAPTER I

THE CLOSE OF A DAY'S MARCH

AT the beginning of October, 1815, and about an hour before sunset, a man travelling on foot entered the little town of D——. The few inhabitants who were at the moment at their windows or doors, regarded this traveller with uneasiness. It would be hard to find a wayfayer of more wretched appearance; he was a man of middle height, muscular and robust, and in the full vigour of life. He might be forty-six to forty-eight years of age. A cap with a leather peak partly concealed his sunburnt face, down which the perspiration streamed. His shirt of coarse yellow linen, fastened at the neck by a small silver anchor, allowed his hairy chest to be seen; he wore a neckcloth twisted into a string, trousers of blue drilling, worn and threadbare, white on one knee and torn on the other; an old, gray, ragged blouse, patched at one elbow with a bit of green cloth stitched with twine; on his back was a large, new, well-buckled, well-filled knapsack, and in his hand a huge knotty stick. His stockingless feet were thrust into iron-nailed shoes, his hair was cut close, and his beard was long. Perspiration, heat, travelling on foot, and the dust, added something sordid to his wretched appearance. His hair was cut close and yet was bristling, for it was beginning to grow a little, and did not seem to have been cut for some time.

No one knew him; he was evidently only passing through the town. Where did he come from? The south perhaps, the sea-board, for he made his entrance into D—— by the same road Napoleon had driven along seven months previously when going from Cannes to Paris. The man must have been walking all day, for he seemed very tired. Some women in the old suburb at the lower part of the town had seen him halt under the trees on the Boulevard Gassendi, and drink from the fountain at the end of the walk. He must have been very thirsty, for the children who followed him saw him stop and drink again at the fountain in the market-place two hundred paces farther on. On reaching the corner of the Rue Poichevert, he turned to the left and proceeded to the mayor's office. He went in, and came out again a quarter of an hour after. A police officer was sitting near the door, on the stone bench which General Drouot had mounted on March 4th, to read to the startled townsfolk of D—— the proclamation of the Gulf of Juan. The man doffed his cap and bowed humbly to the officer; the latter, without returning his salute, looked at him attentively, and then entered the office.

There was at that time at D—— a capital inn, at the sign of the Cross of Colbas. This inn was kept by a certain Jacquin Labarre, a man highly respected in the town for his relationship to another Labarre, who kept the Three Dauphins at Grenoble, and had served in the Guides. When the Emperor landed, many rumours were current in the country about the Three Dauphins; it was said that General Bertrand, in the disguise of a wagoner, had stopped there several times in the month of January, and had distributed crosses of honour to the soldiers and handfuls of gold to the townspeople.

The fact is that the Emperor, on entering Grenoble, refused to take up his quarters at the prefecture; he thanked the mayor, and said, "I am going to a worthy man whom I know," and he went to the Three Dauphins. The glory of the Grenoble Labarre was reflected for a distance of five-and-twenty leagues on the Labarre of the Cross of Col-

bas. The townspeople said of him, "He is cousin to the one at Grenoble."

The man proceeded to this inn, which was the best in that part of the country, and entered the kitchen, the door of which opened on the street. All the ranges were lighted, and a large fire blazed cheerily in the chimney. The host, who was at the same time head-cook, went from the hearth to the stew-pans, very busy in attending to a dinner intended for the carriers, who could be heard laughing and talking noisily in an adjoining room. Any one who has travelled knows that no people feed so well as carriers. A fat marmot, flanked by partridges and grouse, was turning on a long spit before the fire, while two large carp from Lake Lauzet and trout from Lake Allos were bubbling on the stove. The landlord hearing the door open and a stranger enter, said, without raising his eyes from the stew-pans:—

"What do you want, sir?"

"Supper and a bed," the man replied.

"Nothing easier," said mine host. At this moment he looked up, took in the stranger's appearance at a glance, and added, "By paying for it."

The man drew a heavy leathern purse from the pocket of his blouse, and replied:—

"I have money."

"In that case I am at your service," said the host.

The man returned the purse to his pocket, took off his knapsack, placed it on the ground near the door, kept his stick in his hand, and sat down on a low stool near the fire. D—— is in the mountains, and the evenings there are cold in October. As he went to and fro, the landlord still inspected his guest.

"Will supper be ready soon?" the man asked.

"Directly."

While the new-comer turned his back to warm himself, the worthy landlord took a pencil from his pocket, and then tore off the corner of an old newspaper which lay on a small table near the window. He wrote a line or two on the white

margin, folded the paper, and handed it to a lad who seemed to serve both as turnspit and page. The landlord whispered a word in the boy's ear, and he ran off in the direction of the mayor's house. The traveller had seen nothing of all this, and he asked again whether supper would be ready soon. The boy came back with the paper in his hand, and the landlord eagerly unfolded it, like a man who is expecting an answer. He read it carefully, then shook his head, and seemed thoughtful for a moment. At last he walked up to the traveller, who seemed plunged in anything but a pleasant reverie.

"I cannot make room for you, sir," he said.

The man half turned on his stool.

"What do you mean? Are you afraid I shall not pay? Do you want me to pay in advance? I have money, I tell you."

"It is not that."

"What is it, then?"

"You have money."

"Yes," said the man.

"But I have no room."

The man continued quietly: "Put me in the stables."

"I cannot."

"Why?"

"The horses take up all the room."

"Well," replied the man, "a corner of the loft and a truss of straw; we will see to that after supper."

"I cannot give you any supper."

This declaration, made in a measured but firm tone, seemed serious to the stranger. He rose.

"Nonsense; I am dying of hunger. I have been on my legs since sunrise, and have walked twelve leagues. I can pay, and I demand food."

"I have none," said the landlord.

The man burst into a laugh, and turned to the fire and the range.

"Nothing! Why, what is all this?"

"All this is ordered."

“By whom?”

“By the carriers.”

“How many are there of them?”

“Twelve.”

“There is enough food here for twenty.”

“They have engaged it all and paid for it in advance.”

The man sat down again, and said, without raising his voice:—

“I am at an inn, I am hungry, and so shall remain.”

The landlord then stooped, and whispered in a tone which made the man start, “Be off with you!”

The stranger at this moment was thrusting some logs into the fire with the iron-shod tip of his stick, but he turned quickly, and as he opened his mouth to reply, the landlord continued in the same low voice: “Come, enough of this. Do you want me to tell you your name? It is Jean Valjean. Now, do you wish me to tell you who you are? When I saw you come in, I suspected something, so I sent to the police office; and this is the answer I received. Can you read?”

As he said this, he handed the stranger the paper which had travelled from the inn to the office and back again. The man took a glance at it, and mine host continued, after a moment’s silence:—

“I am accustomed to be polite to everybody. Be off!”

The man stooped, picked up his knapsack, and went off. He walked along the high street haphazard, keeping close to the houses like a sad and humiliated man. He did not look back once. Had he done so, he would have seen the landlord of the Cross of Colbas in his doorway, surrounded by all his guests and the passers-by, talking eagerly, and pointing to him; and, judging from the looks of suspicion and terror of the group, he might have guessed that ere long his arrival would be the event of the whole town. He saw nothing of all this, for men who are oppressed do not look back, as they know only too well that an evil destiny is following them.

He walked on thus for a long time, turning down streets he did not know, and forgetting his fatigue, as happens in

sorrow. All at once he was sharply assailed by hunger ; night was approaching, and he looked around to see whether he could not discover a shelter. The best inn was closed against him, and he sought some very humble pot-house, some wretched den. At this moment a lamp was lit at the end of the street, and a fir-branch hanging from an iron bar stood out against the white twilight sky. He went toward it ; it was really a pot-house,—the pot-house in the Rue de Chaffaut. The stranger stopped for a moment and looked through the window into the low tap-room, which was lighted by a small lamp on the table and a large fire on the hearth. Some men were drinking, and the landlord was warming himself ; over the flames bubbled a cauldron hanging from an iron crane. This pot-house, which is also a sort of inn, has two entrances, one on the street, the other opening on a small yard filled with manure. The traveller did not dare to enter by the street door ; he slipped into the yard, stopped once again, and then timidly raised the latch and pushed open the door.

“Who’s there?” asked the landlord.

“Some one who wants a supper and bed.”

“Very good. They are to be had here.”

He went in, and all the toppers turned to look at him ; the lamp illuminated him on one side, the fire on the other. They examined him for some time while he was taking off his knapsack. Said the landlord to him, “Here is a fire ; supper is boiling in the pot ; come and warm yourself, comrade.”

He sat down in the ingle and stretched out his feet, which were swollen with fatigue. A pleasant smell issued from the cauldron. All that could be distinguished of his face, under his visor, assumed a vague appearance of comfort blended with that other pathetic aspect which habitual suffering produces. It was, moreover, a firm, energetic, and sad profile. The face was strangely composite ; for it began by appearing humble, and ended by seeming severe. His eyes gleamed under his brows like a fire through brushwood. One of the men seated at the table was a fishmonger, who, before entering the pot-house, had gone to put up his horse in Labarre’s stables.

Accident willed it that on the same morning he had met this ill-looking stranger walking between Bras d'Asse and — I have forgotten the name, but I fancy it is Escoublon. Now, on meeting him, the man, who appeared very tired, had asked him to give him a lift, which had only made the fishmonger go the faster. This fishmonger had been half an hour previously one of the party surrounding Jacquin Lebarre, and had told his unpleasant encounter of the morning to the people at the Cross of Colbas. He made an imperceptible sign to the landlord from his seat; the latter went up to him, and they exchanged a few whispered words. The man had fallen back into his reverie.

The landlord went up to the fireplace, laid his hand abruptly on the man's shoulder, and said:—

“You must be off from here.”

The stranger turned and replied gently: “Ah, you know?”

“Yes.”

“I was turned out of the other inn.”

“And so you will be out of this.”

“Where would you have me go?”

“Somewhere else.”

The man took his knapsack and stick and went away. As he stepped out, some boys who had followed him from the Cross of Colbas, and seemed to be waiting for him, threw stones at him. He turned savagely, and threatened them with his stick; the boys dispersed like a flock of birds. He passed in front of the prison, and pulled the iron bell-handle; a wicket was opened.

“Mr. Turnkey,” he said, as he humbly doffed his cap, “would you be kind enough to open the door and give me a night's lodging?”

A voice answered, “A prison is not an inn; get yourself arrested and then I will open the door.”

The man entered a small street in which there are numerous gardens; some of them, being merely enclosed with hedges, enliven the street. Among these gardens and hedges

he saw a single-storied house, whose window was illuminated, and he looked through the panes as he had done at the pot-house. It was a large whitewashed room, with a bed with printed chintz curtains, a cradle in a corner, a few chairs, and a double-barrelled gun hanging on the wall. A table was laid for supper in the middle of the room; a copper lamp lit up the coarse white cloth, the pewter mug glistening like silver, and full of wine, and the brown smoking soup-tureen. At this table sat a man about forty years of age, with a hearty, open face, who was riding a child on his knee. By his side, a woman, still young, was suckling another child. The father was laughing, the children were laughing, and the mother was smiling. The stranger stood for a moment pensively before this gentle and calming spectacle. What was going on within him? It would be impossible to say; but it is probable that he thought that this joyous house would prove hospitable, and that where he saw so much happiness he might find a little pity. He tapped very slightly on a window-pane, but was not heard; he tapped a second time, and he heard the woman say, "Husband, I fancy I hear some one knocking."

"No," the husband answered.

He tapped a third time. The husband rose, took the lamp, and walked to the front door. He was a tall man, half peasant, half artisan; he wore a huge leathern apron, which came up to his left shoulder, and in it he carried a hammer, a red handkerchief, a powder-flask, and all sorts of things, which his belt held as in a pocket. As he threw back his head, his shirt opened wide and turned back, displayed his bull neck, white and bare. He had thick eyebrows, enormous black whiskers, prominent eyes, a bull-dog lower jaw, and, besides all this, an indescribable air of being at home.

"I beg your pardon," said the traveller, "but would you, for payment, give me a plate of soup and a corner of your garden shed to sleep in?"

"Who are you?" asked the owner of the cottage.

The man answered, "I have come from Puy Moisson; I

have walked the whole day. Could you do it? — for payment, of course.”

“I would not refuse,” the peasant answered, “to lodge any respectable person who paid. But why do you not go to the inn?”

“There is no room.”

“Nonsense! that is impossible; it is neither market nor fair day. Have you been to Labarre’s?”

“Yes.”

“Well?”

The traveller continued, with some hesitation, “I do not know why. He refused to take me in.”

“Have you been to What’s-his-name’s, in the Rue de Chaffaut?”

The stranger’s embarrassment increased; he stammered, “He would not take me either.”

The peasant’s face assumed an expression of distrust; he surveyed the new-comer from head to foot, and all at once exclaimed, with a sort of shudder:—

“Can you be the man?”

He took another look at the stranger, placed the lamp on the table, and took down his gun. On hearing the peasant say, “Can you be the man?” his wife had risen, taken her two children in her arms, and hurriedly sought refuge behind her husband, looking in horror at the stranger, with bare bosom and startled eyes, as she muttered: “Tso-maraude!” (The villain!) All this took place in less time than is needed to imagine it. After examining the man for some minutes as if he had been a viper, the peasant turned to the door and said, “Be off!”

“For mercy’s sake,” the man continued, “a glass of water.”

“A charge of shot!” the peasant said.

Then he closed the door violently, and the stranger heard him push two bolts. A moment after, the window shutters were closed, and the sound of the iron bar reached his ear. Night was coming on apace; a cold wind from the Alps was

blowing. By the light of the expiring day the stranger noticed in one of the gardens a sort of hut which seemed to him to be made of sods. He boldly clambered over a railing and found himself in the garden; he approached the hut, which had as entrance a narrow, extremely low door, and resembled the hovels which road-menders construct by the side of the highway. He doubtless thought it was such; he was suffering from cold and hunger, and though he had made up his mind to starve, it was at any rate a shelter against the cold. As this sort of residence is not usually occupied at night, he lay down on his stomach and crawled into the hut; it was warm, and he found rather a good straw litter in it. He lay for a moment motionless on this bed as his fatigue was great; but as his knapsack hurt his back and was a ready-made pillow, he began unbuckling one of the thongs. At this moment a hoarse growl was heard; he raised his eyes, and the head of an enormous mastiff was outlined in the shadow at the opening of the hut. It was the dog's kennel. The dog itself was strong and formidable, hence the man raised his stick, employed his knapsack as a shield, and left the kennel as he best could, though not without enlarging the rents in his rags.

He also left the garden, but backward, and compelled to flourish his stick in order to keep the dog at a respectful distance. When he had, not without difficulty, leaped the fence again, and found himself once more in the street, alone, without a bed, roof, or shelter, and expelled even from the bed of straw and that miserable kennel, he fell rather than sat on a stone, and a passer-by heard him exclaim, "I am not even a dog." He soon rose and resumed his walk. He left the town hoping to find some tree or some mill in the fields which would afford him shelter. He walked on thus for some time with drooping head; when he found himself far from all human habitations, he raised his eyes and looked around him. He was in a field, and before him was one of those low hills, with close-cut stubble, which after harvest resemble cropped heads. The horizon was perfectly black;

it was not solely the gloom of night, but low clouds, which seemed to be resting on the hill itself, rose and filled the whole sky. Still, as the moon was about to rise, and a remnant of twilight still hovered in the zenith, these clouds formed a species of whitish vault whence a gleam of light was thrown on the earth.

The ground was, therefore, better lighted than the sky, which produces a peculiarly sinister effect; and the hill with its poor, weak outlines stood out vague and wan against the gloomy horizon. The whole scene was hideous, mean, mournful, and narrow; there was nothing in the field or on the hill but a stunted tree, which writhed and trembled a few yards from the traveller. This man was evidently far from possessing those delicate habits of mind which render one sensible to the mysterious aspects of things; still there was in the sky, the hill, the plain, and the tree, something so profoundly desolate that, after standing motionless and thoughtful for a moment, he suddenly turned back. There are instants in which nature seems to be hostile.

He retraced his steps and found the gates of the town closed. D——, which sustained sieges in the religious wars, was in 1815 still begirt by old walls flanked by square towers, which have since been demolished. He passed through a breach, and re-entered the town. It might have been about eight o'clock in the evening; and as he did not know the streets, he wandered about without purpose. He thus reached the prefecture and then the seminary; as he passed through the cathedral square he shook his fist at the church. At the corner of this square there is a printing-office, where the proclamations of the Emperor and the imperial guard to the army, brought from Elba, and dictated by Napoleon himself, were first printed.

Worn out with fatigue, and hopeless, he threw himself down on the stone bench at the door of this printing-office. Just then an old woman left the church and saw the man stretched out in the darkness.

"What are you doing there, my friend?" she said.

He answered, harshly and savagely, "You can see, my good woman, that I am going to sleep."

The good woman, who was really worthy of the name, was the Marchioness of R——.

"On that bench?" she asked.

"I have had a wooden mattress for nineteen years," said the man, "and now I have a stone one."

"Have you been a soldier?"

"Yes, my good woman."

"Why do you not go to the inn?"

"Because I have no money."

"Alas!" said Madame R——, "I have only twopence in my purse."

"You can give them to me, all the same."

The man took the money, and Madame R—— continued, "You cannot lodge at an inn for so small a sum; but have you made the attempt? You cannot possibly spend the night here. Doubtless, you are cold and hungry, and some one might take you in for charity."

"I have knocked at every door."

"Well?"

"And was turned away from all."

The "good woman" touched the man's arm and pointed out to him a small house on the other side of the Square, next to the bishop's palace.

"You have," she continued, "knocked at every door. Have you done so there?"

"No."

"Then do it."

CHAPTER II

PRUDENCE COUNSELLED TO WISDOM

THAT evening, the bishop of D——, after his walk in the town, had remained in his bedroom till a late hour. He was engaged on a great work on "Duties," which he unfortunately left incomplete. He carefully analyzed all that the Fathers and Doctors have said on this grave matter. The book was divided into two parts,—first, the duties of all; second, the duties of each individual, according to the class to which he belongs. The duties of all are the "great duties," four in number. They are indicated by Saint Matthew,—duty to God (Matt. vi.); duty to self (Matt. v. 29, 30); duty to one's neighbour (Matt. vii. 42), and duty to God's creatures (Matt. vi. 20, 25). As regards the other duties, the bishop found them pointed out and prescribed elsewhere: to sovereigns and subjects, in the Epistle to the Romans; to magistrates, wives, mothers, and young men, by Saint Peter; to husbands, fathers, children, and servants, in the Epistle to the Ephesians; to the faithful, in the Epistle to the Hebrews; to virgins, in the Epistle to the Corinthians. Out of all these teachings he was laboriously constructing a harmonious whole which he wished to present to souls.

He was still working at eight o'clock, writing rather uncomfortably on small sheets of paper, with a large book open on his knees, when Madame Magloire came in as usual to fetch the silver from the cupboard near the bed. A moment after, the bishop, knowing that supper was ready and that his sister might be waiting, closed his book, rose from the table, and walked into the dining-room. It was an oblong apartment, as we have said, with a fireplace, a door opening on the street, and a window looking on the garden. Madame Magloire had laid the table, and while attending

to her duties was chatting with Mlle. Baptistine. A lamp stood on the table, which was close to the fireplace, in which a good fire was burning.

We can easily picture the two women, both of whom had passed their sixtieth year: Madame Magloire, short, stout, and vivacious; Mlle. Baptistine, gentle, slender, and frail, somewhat taller than her brother, dressed in a puce-coloured silk gown, the fashionable colour in 1806, which she had bought in Paris in that year, and which still held out. To borrow common terms which have the merit of conveying in a single word an idea which a page would scarcely suffice to express, Madame Magloire looked like a peasant, her mistress like a lady. Madame Magloire wore a white fluted cap, at her neck a gold cross,—the only piece of feminine jewelry in the house,—a very white handkerchief emerging from a black stuff gown with wide, short sleeves, a red and green checked calico apron, tied round the waist with a green ribbon, a bib of the same stuff fastened with two pins at the top corners, heavy shoes and yellow stockings, like the Marseilles women. Mlle. Baptistine's gown was cut after the fashion of 1806, short-waisted, scant skirt, epaulets on the sleeves, with flaps and buttons; and she concealed her gray hair under a frizzed front called a "baby-wig." Madame Magloire had an intelligent, quick, and kindly air, though the unevenly raised corners of her mouth and the upper lip, thicker than the lower, gave her a somewhat rough and imperious air. So long as Monseigneur was silent, she spoke to him boldly with mingled respect and freedom; but so soon as he spoke she passively obeyed, like her mistress, who never replied, but restricted herself to obeying and pleasing him. Even when she was young, the latter was not pretty. She had large, prominent blue eyes, and a long peaked nose; but her whole face, her whole person, as we said at the outset, breathed ineffable kindness. She always was predestined to gentleness; but Faith, Hope, and Charity, those three virtues which softly warm the soul, had gradually elevated that gentleness into sanctity. Nature had made her only a lamb, and religion

had made her an angel. Poor sainted woman! Sweet vanished memory!

She afterward narrated so many times what took place at the bishopric on this evening that several persons still living remember the slightest details. When the bishop entered, Madame Magloire was talking with some vivacity; she was conversing with her mistress on a subject that was familiar to her, and to which the bishop was accustomed,—that is, the matter of the front door latch. It appears that while going to buy something for supper, Madame Magloire had heard things in various quarters; people were talking of an ill-looking prowler, a suspicious vagabond, who was somewhere in town; and it would possibly be an unpleasant thing, for any one who took a fancy to come home late, to meet him. The police were very badly managed because the prefect and the mayor were not friendly, and tried to injure each other by allowing things to happen. Hence wise people would be their own police, and be careful to bolt and bar their houses, *and lock their doors*.

Madame Magloire emphasized the last words; but the bishop had just come from his room, where it was rather cold, and was warming himself at the fire; and besides, he was thinking of other matters. In fact, he did not catch the words which Madame Magloire had just let drop. She repeated them; and then Mlle. Baptistine, who wished to satisfy Madame Magloire without displeasing her brother, ventured to say timidly:—

“Brother, do you hear what Madame Magloire says?”

“I heard something vaguely,” the bishop answered; then he half turned his chair, placed his hands on his knees, and looked up at the old servant with his cordial and easily pleased face, which the fire illumined from below: “Well, what is it? what is it? Are we in any great danger?”

Then Madame Magloire told her story over again, exaggerating it slightly, though unsuspicious of the fact. It would seem that a gypsy, a barefooted fellow, a sort of dangerous beggar, was in town. He had tried to get a lodging at

Jacquin Labarre's, but he had refused to take him in. He had been seen prowling about the streets at nightfall, and was evidently a gallows-bird, with his frightful face.

"Is he really?" said the bishop.

This willingness to question her, encouraged Madame Magloire; it seemed to show that the bishop was beginning to grow alarmed, and hence she continued triumphantly:—

"Yes, sir, it is so; and some misfortune will occur in town to-night. Everybody says so; and then the police are so badly managed! [Useful repetition.] Fancy living in a mountainous country, and not even having lights in the streets at night! You go out and find yourself in pitch darkness. I say, sir, and your sister says —"

"I," interrupted his sister, "say nothing; whatever my brother does is right."

Madame Magloire continued, as if no protest had been made:—

"We say that this house is not at all safe, and that if Monseigneur permits, I will go to Paulin Musebois, the locksmith, and tell him to put the old bolts on the door again; I have them by me, and it will not take a minute. And I say, sir, that we ought to have bolts, if it were only for to-night; for I say that a door which can be opened from the outside by the first passer-by is most terrible. Besides, you, sir, always say, 'Come in;' and even in the middle of the night, oh, my gracious! there is no occasion to ask for permission."

At this moment there was rather a loud rap at the front door.

"Come in," said the bishop.

CHAPTER III

THE HEROISM OF PASSIVE OBEDIENCE

THE door opened. It opened wide, as if some one had given it an energetic and resolute push. A man entered whom we already know; it was the traveller whom we saw just now wandering about in search of a shelter. He entered and paused, leaving the door open behind him. He had his knapsack on his shoulder, his stick in his hand, and a rough, bold, wearied, and violent expression in his eyes. The firelight fell on him,—he was hideous; it was a sinister apparition.

Madame Magloire had not even the strength to utter a cry; she shivered, and stood with widely open mouth. Mlle. Baptistine turned, saw the man entered, and half started up in terror; then, turning her head by degrees to the fireplace, she looked at her brother, and her face became calm and serene again. The bishop fixed a tranquil eye on the man. As he opened his mouth, doubtless to ask the new-comer what he wanted, the man leaned both hands on his stick, looked in turn at the two women and the old man, and, not waiting for the bishop to speak, said in a loud voice:—

“Look here! my name is Jean Valjean. I am a galley-slave, and have spent nineteen years in the galleys. I was set free four days ago, and started for Pontarlier, which is my destination. I have been walking for four days since I left Toulon, and to-day I have travelled twelve leagues. This evening on coming into town I went to the inn, but was sent away in consequence of my yellow passport, which I had shown at the police office. I went to another inn, and the landlord said to me, ‘Be off!’ It was the same everywhere, and no one would have any dealings with me. I went to the prison, but the jailer would not take me in. I got into a dog’s kennel, but the dog bit me and drove me off, as if

he had been a man; he seemed to know who I was. I went into the fields to sleep in the starlight, but there were no stars. I thought it would rain; and as there was no God to prevent it from raining, I came back to the town to find shelter in a doorway. I was lying down on a stone in the Square, when a good woman pointed out your house, and said, 'Go and knock there.' What sort of a house is this? Do you keep an inn? I have money,—one hundred and nine francs, fifteen sous,—which I earned in the galleys by my nineteen years' toil. I will pay. What do I care? I have money! I am very tired,—twelve leagues on foot,—and frightfully hungry; will you let me stay here?"

"Madame Magloire," said the bishop, "you will lay another knife and fork."

The man advanced three paces, and approached the lamp which was on the table. "Wait a minute," he continued, as if he had not fully understood; "that will not do. Did you not hear me say that I was a galley-slave, a convict, and have just come from the galleys?" He took from his pocket a large yellow paper, which he unfolded. "Here is my passport, yellow, as you see, which turns me out wherever I go. Will you read it? I can read it, for I learned to do so in the galleys, where there is a school for those who like to attend. This is what is written in my passport: 'Jean Valjean, discharged convict, native of'—but that does not concern you—'has been nineteen years in the galleys. Five years for robbing and entering, fourteen years for trying four times to escape. The man is very dangerous.' There! Every one has turned me out, and are you willing to receive me? Is this an inn? Will you give me some food and a bed? Have you a stable?"

"Madame Magloire," said the bishop, "you will put clean sheets on the bed in the alcove."

We have already explained the nature of the two women's obedience. Madame Magloire left the room to carry out her orders. The bishop turned to the man.

"Sit down and warm yourself, sir. We shall sup di-

rectly, and your bed will be got ready while you are supping."

The man understood this at once. The expression of his face, which had hitherto been gloomy and harsh, was marked with stupefaction, joy, doubt, and became extraordinary. He began to stammer like a lunatic.

"Is it true? What! you will let me stay; you will not turn me out, a convict? You call me *Sir*. 'Get out, dog!' that is what is always said to me; I really believed you would turn me out, and so I told you at once who I am! Oh, what a worthy woman she was who sent me here! I shall have supper, a bed with mattresses and sheets, like everybody else! A bed! For nineteen years I have not slept in a bed! You really mean that I am to stay? You are good people; besides, I have money and will pay handsomely. By the way, what is your name, Mr. Landlord? I will pay anything you please, for you are a good man. You keep an inn, do you not?"

"I am," said the bishop, "a priest, living in this house."

"A priest!" the man continued. "Oh, what a good priest! Then you will not ask me for money. The priest, I suppose, of that big church? Oh, yes, what an ass I am; I did not notice your cassock."

As he spoke, he deposited his knapsack and stick in a corner, returned his passport to his pocket, and sat down. While Mlle. Baptistine regarded him mildly, he went on:

"You are humane, sir, and do not feel contempt. A good priest is very good. Then you do not want me to pay?"

"No," said the bishop, "keep your money. How much have you? Didn't you say a hundred and nine francs?"

"And fifteen sous," added the man.

"A hundred and nine francs fifteen sous. How long did it take you to earn them?"

"Nineteen years."

"Nineteen years!" The bishop gave a deep sigh.

The man went on: "I have all my money still; in four days I have only spent twenty-five sous, which I earned by helping to unload carts at Grasse. As you are a priest, I

will tell you: we had a chaplain in the galleys, and one day I saw a bishop. They called him 'Monseigneur.' He was the bishop of Majore, at Marseilles. He is the priest over the priests, you know; but pardon me, I express myself badly, it's such a far off thing for me, you understand. He said mass in the middle of the galleys at an altar, and had a pointed gold thing on his head, which glistened in the bright sunshine. We were drawn up on three sides of a square, with cannons with lighted matches facing us. He spoke, but was too far off, and we did not hear him. That is what a bishop is."

While he was speaking the bishop closed the door, which had been left open. Madame Magloire came in, bringing a silver spoon and fork, which she placed on the table.

"Madame Magloire," said the bishop, "lay them as near as you can to the fire." And turning to his guest, he said, "The night breeze is sharp in the Alps, and you must be cold, sir."

Each time he said the word *Sir*, with his gentle, grave voice, the man's face shone. *Sir* to a convict is like a glass of water to a shipwrecked sailor on the Medusa. Ignominy thirsts for respect.

"This lamp gives a very bad light," the bishop continued. Madame Magloire understood, and fetched the two silver candlesticks from the chimneypiece in Monseigneur's bedroom, placing them on the table ready lighted.

"Mr. Priest," said the man, "you are good, and do not despise me. You receive me as a friend, and light your wax candles for me; and yet I have not hidden from you whence I come, and that I am an unfortunate fellow."

The bishop, who was seated by his side, gently touched his hand. "You need not have told me who you were; this is not my house, but the house of Christ. This door does not ask a man who enters whether he has a name, but whether he has a sorrow; you are suffering, you are hungry and thirsty, and so you are welcome. And do not thank me, or say that I receive you in my house, for no one is at home here except

the man who needs a refuge. I tell you, who are a passer-by, that you are more at home here than I am myself, and everything here is yours. Why should I want to know your name? Besides, before you told it to me you had one which I knew."

The man opened his eyes in amazement.

"Is that true? You know my name?"

"Yes," answered the bishop; "you are my brother."

"Mr. Priest," exclaimed the man, "I was very hungry when I came in, but you are so kind that I do not know what ails me; it has passed away."

The bishop looked at him and said:—

"You have suffered greatly?"

"Oh, the red jacket, the cannon-ball at your ankle, a plank to sleep on, heat, cold, labour, the convicts, the blows, the double chain for every trifle, a dungeon for a word, even when you are ill in bed, and the chain-gang! The very dogs are happier. Nineteen years, and now I am forty-six; and now the yellow passport! Here it is!"

"Yes," said the bishop, "you have come from a place of sorrow. Listen to me; there will be more joy in heaven over the tearful face of a repentant sinner than over the white robes of one hundred just men. If you leave that sad place with thoughts of hatred and anger against your fellow-men, you are worthy of pity; if you leave it with thoughts of kindness, gentleness, and peace, you are worth more than any of us."

Meantime Madame Magloire had served supper,—soup made of water, oil, bread, and salt, a little bacon, a piece of mutton, figs, a fresh cheese, and a loaf of rye bread. She had herself added a bottle of old Mauves wine. The bishop's face suddenly assumed the expression of gayety peculiar to hospitable natures. "To table," he said eagerly, as he was wont to do when any stranger supped with him; and he bade the man sit on his right hand, while Mlle. Baptistine, perfectly serene and natural, took her seat on his left. The bishop said grace, and then served the soup himself, as usual.

The man began to eat greedily. All at once the bishop said:—

“It strikes me that there is something wanting on the table.”

Madame Magloire, truth to tell, had only laid the absolutely necessary silver. Now, it was the custom in this house, when the bishop had any one to supper, to arrange the whole stock of plate on the table,—an innocent display. This graceful semblance of luxury was a sort of childishness full of charm in this gentle and strict house, and elevated poverty to dignity. Madame Magloire took the hint, went out without a word, and a moment after, the remaining spoons and forks glittered on the cloth, symmetrically arranged before each of the guests.

CHAPTER IV

DETAILS OF CHEESE-MAKING AT PONTARLIER

AND now, in order to give an idea of what took place at table, we cannot do better than transcribe a passage from a letter written by Mlle. Baptistine to Madame Boischevron, in which the conversation between the convict and the bishop is recorded with simple minuteness.

“The man paid no attention to any one; he ate with frightful voracity, but after supper he said:—

“‘Mr. Priest, all this is much too good for me; but I am bound to say that the wagoners who would not let me sup with them have better cheer than you.’

“Between ourselves, this remark slightly offended me, but my brother answered:—

“‘They work harder than I.’

“‘No,’ the man continued, ‘they have more money. You

are poor, as I can plainly see; perhaps you have not even a parish. Ah, if Heaven were just, you would have a parish.'

"'Heaven is more than just,' said my brother. A moment after he added:—

"'Monsieur Jean Valjean, I think you said you were going to Pontarlier?'

"'I am compelled to go there.' Then he continued, 'I must be off by sunrise to-morrow; travelling is hard work, for if the nights are cold, the days are hot.'

"'You are going to an excellent part of the country,' my brother resumed. 'When the Revolution ruined my family, I sought shelter first in Franche Comté, and lived there for some time by the labour of my hands. I had a good will, and found plenty to do. One need only choose. There are paper-mills, tanneries, distilleries, oil-mills, wholesale clock manufactories, steel-works, copper-works, and at least twenty iron-foundries of which the four at Lods, Chatillon, Audincourt, and Beure are very large.'

"'I am pretty sure I am not mistaken, and that these are the names my brother mentioned; then he broke off and addressed me:—

"'My dear sister, have we not some relatives in those parts?'

"My answer was, 'We used to have some; among others, Monsieur de Lucinet, who was captain of the gates at Pontarlier, under the old rule.'

"'Yes,' added my brother, 'but in '93 people had no relatives; they had only their arms, and so I worked. In the country where you are going, Monsieur Valjean, there is a truly patriarchal and pleasing trade. My dear sister, I mean their cheese manufactories, which they call *fruitières*.'

"Then my brother, while pressing the man to eat, explained in their fullest details the *fruitières* of Pontarlier, which are divided into two classes,—the large farms, which belong to the rich, where there are forty or fifty cows, which produce seven to eight thousand cheeses in a summer, and the partnership *fruitières*, which belong to the poor. The

peasants of the central mountain district keep their cows in common and divide the produce. They hire a cheese-maker, who is called the *grurin*; he receives the milk from the partners thrice a day, and enters the quantities in a book. Cheese-making begins about the middle of April, and the cheese-makers drive their cows to the mountains toward midsummer:

“The man grew animated while eating, and my brother made him drink that excellent Mauves wine, which he does not drink himself because he says that it is expensive. My brother gave him all these details with that easy gayety of his which you know, mingling his remarks with graceful appeals to myself. He dwelt a good deal on the comfortable position of the *grurin*, as if wishful to make the man understand, without advising him directly and harshly, that it would be a refuge for him. One thing struck me: the man was what I have told you; well, my brother, during the whole of supper and, indeed, of the evening, did not, with the exception of some words about the Saviour, when he entered, utter a word which could remind this man of what he was, or tell him who my brother was. It was apparently a good opportunity to give him a little lecture, and to let the bishop produce a good effect on the galley-slave. It might have seemed to any one else that, having this wretched man in hand, it would be right to feed his mind at the same time as his body, and to address to him a few reproaches seasoned with morality and advice, or at any rate a little commiseration, with an exhortation to behave better in the future. My brother did not even ask him where he came from, or his history; for his fault is contained in his history, and my brother appeared to avoid everything which might recall it to his mind. This was carried to such a point that at a certain moment, when my brother was talking about the mountaineers of Pontarlier, ‘who had a pleasant task near heaven,’ and who, he added, ‘are happy because they are innocent,’ he stopped short, fearing lest there might be in the remark something to affect this man unpleasantly. After consider-

able reflection, I believe I can understand what was going on in my brother's heart; he doubtless thought that this Jean Valjean's misfortune was ever present in his mind, that the best thing was to divert him, and make him believe, were it only momentarily, that he was a man like the rest, by behaving to him as he would to others. Was not this real charity!

"Is there not, my dear lady, something truly evangelical in the delicacy, which abstains from all lecturing and allusions; and is it not the truest pity, when a man has a sore point, not to touch it at all? It seemed to me that this might be my brother's innermost thought; in any case, what I can safely say is, that if he had all these ideas he did not betray any of them, even to me. He was from beginning to end the same man he is every night; and he supped with Jean Valjean with the same air and in the same way as if he had been supping with M. Gédéon le Prevôt, or with the parish priest.

"Toward the end, when we had come to the figs, there was a knock at the door. It was Mother Gerbaud with her little baby in her arms. My brother kissed the child, and borrowed from me fifteen sous, which I happened to have about me, to give to the mother. The man, while this was going on, did not seem to pay great attention; he said nothing, and seemed very tired. When poor old Mother Gerbaud left, my brother said grace, and then said to the man, 'You must need your bed.' Madame Magloire hastily cleared the table. I understood that we must retire in order to let this traveller sleep, and we both went upstairs. I, however, sent Madame Magloire down a moment later to lay on the man's bed a roebuck's hide, from the Black Forest, which was in my room, for the nights are very cold, and that keeps one warm. It is a pity that the skin is old and the hair is wearing off. My brother bought it when he was in Germany, at Tottlingen, near the source of the Danube, as well as the small ivory-handled knife which I use at meals.

"Madame Magloire came up again almost immediately.

We said our prayers in the room where the clothes are hung to dry, and then retired to our bedrooms without saying a word to each other."

CHAPTER V

TRANQUILLITY

AFTER bidding his sister good-night, Monseigneur Bienvenu took up one of the silver candlesticks, handed the other to his guest, and said:—

"I will take you to your room, sir."

The man followed him. The reader will remember, from our description, that the rooms were so arranged that in order to reach or leave the oratory, where the alcove was, it was necessary to pass through the bishop's bedroom. As he went through this room, Madame Magloire was putting away the plate in the cupboard over the bed-head; it was the last thing she did every night before retiring. The bishop led his guest to the alcove, where a clean bed was prepared for him. The man placed the branched candlestick on a small table.

"I trust you will pass a good night," said the bishop. "To-morrow morning, before starting, you will drink a glass of milk fresh from our cows."

"Thank you, Mr. Priest," said the man. He had hardly uttered these peaceful words when, suddenly, and without any transition, he made a strange motion, which would have frightened the two old women to death had they witnessed it. Even now it is difficult to explain what impelled him at that moment. Did he wish to warn or to threaten? Was he simply obeying an instinctive impulse, obscure even to himself? He suddenly turned to the old man, folded his arms, and, fixing on him a savage gaze, he exclaimed hoarsely:—

"What! you really lodge me so close to you as that?" He broke off, and added with a laugh, in which there was something monstrous: "Have you reflected fully? Who tells you that I have not committed a murder?"

The bishop answered: "That is God's concern."

Then gravely moving his lips, like a man who is praying and speaking to himself, he stretched out two fingers of his right hand and blessed the man, who did not bow his head, and returned to his bedroom, without turning his head or looking behind him. When the alcove was occupied, a large serge curtain drawn right across the oratory concealed the altar. The bishop knelt as he passed before this curtain, and offered up a short prayer; a moment after, he was in his garden, walking, dreaming, musing, his soul and thoughts entirely occupied by those grand mysteries which God displays at night to eyes that remain open.

As for the man, he was really so wearied that he did not even take advantage of the nice white sheets. He blew out the candle with his nostrils, after the fashion of convicts, and threw himself in his clothes upon the bed, where he at once fell into a deep sleep. Midnight was striking as the bishop returned from the garden to his room, and a few minutes later everybody in the small house was asleep.

CHAPTER VI

JEAN VALJEAN

TOWARD the middle of the night, Jean Valjean awoke. He belonged to a poor peasant family of La Brie. In his childhood he had not been taught to read, and when he was of man's age he was a pruner at Faverolles. His mother's name was Jeanne Mathieu; his father's, Jean Valjean, or Vla-jean,—probably a nickname and a contraction of *Voilà Jean*.

Jean Valjean possessed a pensive but not melancholy character, which is peculiar to affectionate natures; but altogether he was a dull, insignificant fellow, at least apparently. He had lost father and mother when still very young; the latter died of a badly managed milk-fever; the former, a pruner, like himself, was killed by a fall from a tree. All that was left Jean Valjean, was a sister older than himself, a widow with seven children, boys and girls. This sister brought Jean Valjean up, and so long as her husband was alive she supported her brother. When the husband died, the oldest of the seven children was eight years of age, the youngest, one, while Jean Valjean had just reached his twenty-fifth year; he took the place of the father, and in his turn supported the sister who had reared him. This was done simply as a duty, and even rather roughly, by Jean Valjean; and his youth was thus expended in hard and ill-paid toil. He was never known to have a sweetheart, for he had no time for love-making.

At night he came home tired, and ate his soup without a word. His sister, Mother Jeanne, while he was eating, often took out of his porringer the best part of his meal,—the piece of meat, the slice of bacon, or the heart of the cabbage,—to give to one of her children; he, still eating, bent over the table with his head almost in the soup, and, his long hair falling around his porringer and hiding his eyes, pretending not to see it, and let her do as she pleased. There was at Faverolles, not far from the Valjeans' cottage, on the other side of the lane, a farmer's wife called Marie Claude. The young Valjeans, who were always starving, would sometimes go and borrow a pint of milk, in their mother's name, from Marie Claude, which they drank behind a hedge or in some corner, tearing the jug from each other so eagerly that the little girls spilled the milk over their aprons. Their mother, had she been aware of this fraud, would have severely corrected the delinquents; but Jean Valjean, coarse and rough though he was, paid Marie Claude for the milk behind his sister's back, and the children were not punished.

He earned in the pruning season eighteen sous a day, and besides hired himself out as reaper, labourer, neat-herd, and odd man. He did what he could; his sister worked too, but what could she do with seven little children? It was a sad group, which wretchedness gradually enveloped and choked. A hard winter came, Jean had no work, and the family had no bread. No bread,—literally none,—and seven children.

One Sunday evening, Maubert Isabeau, the baker in the church square at Faverolles, was just going to bed when he heard a violent blow on the grated and glazed front of his shop. He ran out in time to see an arm passed through a hole made by a fist through the gratings and window-pane; a hand seized a loaf, and carried it off. Isabeau rushed to the door; the thief ran away at his hardest, but the baker caught him up and stopped him. The thief had thrown away the loaf, but his arm was still bleeding; it was Jean Valjean.

This took place in 1795. Jean Valjean was brought before the courts, charged “with burglary committed with violence at night, in an inhabited house.” He had a gun, was a splendid shot, and a bit of a poacher, and this injured him. There is a legitimate prejudice against poachers, for, like smugglers, they trench very closely on brigandage. Still we must remark that there is an abyss between these classes and the hideous assassins of our cities. The poacher lives in the forest; the smuggler in the mountains and on the sea. Cities produce ferocious men because they produce corrupt men. The forest, the mountain, and the sea produce savage men; but, while they develop their fierce side, they do not always destroy their humane side. Jean Valjean was found guilty, and the terms of the code were explicit. There are in our civilization formidable moments; they are those in which penal justice decrees a shipwreck. What a mournful minute is that in which society withdraws and consummates the irreparable abandonment of a thinking being! Jean Valjean was sentenced to five years at the galleys.

On April 22, 1796, men were crying in the streets of Paris

the victory of Montenotte, gained by the general-in-chief of the army of Italy, whom the message of the Directory to the Five Hundred of 2 Floréal, year IV., calls Buona-Parte; and on the same day a heavy gang was put in chains at Bicêtre, and Jean Valjean formed part of the gang. A former jailer of the prison, now nearly ninety years of age, perfectly remembers the wretched man who was chained at the end of the fourth line, in the north corner of the courtyard. He was seated on the ground like the rest, and seemed not at all to understand his position, except that it was horrible. It is probable that he also was disentangling something excessive from amidst the vague ideas of an utterly ignorant man. While the bolt of his iron collar was being riveted with heavy hammer-blows behind his head, he wept; tears choked him, and prevented him from speaking, and he could only manage to say from time to time, "I was a pruner at Faverolles." Then, still sobbing, he raised his right hand, and lowered it gradually seven times, as if touching seven heads of unequal height, and from this gesture it could be guessed that, whatever the crime he had committed, he had done it to feed and clothe seven little children.

He started for Toulon, and arrived there after a journey of twenty-seven days in a cart, with the chain on his neck. At Toulon he was dressed in the red jacket. All that had hitherto been his life, even to his name, was effaced. He was no longer Jean Valjean, but No. 24,601. What became of his sister, what became of the seven children? Who troubles himself about that? What becomes of the spray of leaves when the young tree is chopped off at the foot? It is always the same story. These poor living beings, these creatures of God, henceforth without support, guide, or shelter, went off at random, and were gradually lost in that cold fog which swallows up solitary destinies, that mournful gloom in which so many unfortunates disappear during the sombre progress of the human race. They left the country. What had once been the steeple of their village church forgot them; what had once been their hedgerow forgot them; and

after a few years' stay in the galleys, Jean Valjean himself forgot them. In that heart where there had once been a wound, there was now a scar; that was all. He only heard of his sister once during the whole time he spent at Toulon; it was, I believe, toward the end of the fourth year of his imprisonment, though I have forgotten in what way the information reached him. She was in Paris, living in the Rue du Gindre, a poor street, near St. Sulpice, and had only one child with her, the youngest, a boy. Where were the other six? Perhaps she did not know herself. Every morning she went to a printing-office, No. 3 Rue du Sabot, where she was a folder and stitcher; she had to be there at six in the morning, long before daylight in winter. In the same house as the printing-office there was a day-school, to which she took the little boy, who was seven years of age; but as she went to work at six and the school did not open till seven, the boy was compelled to wait in the yard for an hour, in winter,—an hour of winter night in the open air. The boy was not allowed to enter the printing-office, because it was said that he would be in the way. The workmen as they passed in the morning saw the poor little fellow seated on the pavement, and often sleeping in the darkness, with his head on his satchel. When it rained, an old woman, the portress, took pity on him; she invited him into her den, where there were only a bed, a spinning-wheel, and two chairs, and the little fellow fell asleep in a corner, nestling up to the cat, to keep him warm. At seven o'clock the school opened and the child went in. This is what Jean Valjean was told. It was a momentary flash, as though a window had suddenly opened upon the destiny of the beings he had loved, and then was closed again; he never heard of them more. Nothing reached him from them; he never saw them again, never met them, and we shall not come across them in the course of this melancholy tale.

Toward the end of this fourth year, Jean Valjean's turn to escape came, and his comrades aided him as they always do in that sorrowful place. He escaped, and wandered about

the fields at liberty for two days,—if it is liberty to be hunted down; to turn one's head at every moment; to start at the slightest sound; to be afraid of everything,—of a smoking chimney, a passing man, a barking dog, a galloping horse, the striking of the hour, of day because people see, of night because they do not see, of the highway, the path, the thicket, and even of sleep. On the evening of the second day he was recaptured; he had not eaten or slept for six-and-thirty hours. The maritime tribunal added three years to his sentence for this crime, which made it eight years. In the sixth year, it was again his turn to escape; he tried, but did not succeed. He was missing at roll-call, the gun was fired, and at night the watchman found him hidden under the keel of a ship that was building, and he resisted the prison guard who seized him. Escape and rebellion; this case, provided for by the special code, was punished by an addition of five years, of which two would be spent in double chains. Thirteen years. In his tenth year his turn came again, and he took advantage of it, but succeeded no better; three years for this new attempt, or sixteen years in all. Finally, I think it was during his thirteenth year, he made a last attempt, and only succeeded in being recaptured in four hours; three years for these four hours, and a total of nineteen years. In October, 1815, he was set free; in 1796 he had gone in for breaking a window and stealing a loaf.

Let us make room for a short parenthesis. This is the second time that, during his study of the penal question and condemnation by the law, the author of this book has come across a loaf as the starting-point of the disaster of a destiny. Claude Gueux stole a loaf, and so did Jean Valjean; and English statistics prove that in London four robberies out of five have hunger for their immediate cause. Jean Valjean entered the galleys sobbing and shuddering; he left them stoically. He entered in despair; he came out gloomy. What had taken place in his soul?

CHAPTER VII

A DESPERATE MAN'S HEART

LET us try to tell.

Society must necessarily look at these things, because it creates them. He was, as we have said, an ignorant man, but he was not a fool. The light of nature was kindled within him, and misfortune, which also has its own clear vision, increased the little daylight that existed in his mind. Under the stick and the chain in the dungeon, when at work beneath the torrid sun of the galleys, or when lying on the convict's plank, he reflected. He constituted himself a court, and began by trying himself. He saw that he was not an innocent man unjustly punished. He confessed that he had committed an extreme and blamable action; that the loaf would probably not have been refused him had he asked for it; that in any case it would have been better to wait till he could get it, either from pity or by work; and that it was not a thoroughly unanswerable argument to say, "Can a man wait when he is hungry?" that, in the first place, it is very rare for a man to die literally of hunger; next, that, unhappily or happily, man is so made that he can suffer long and severely, morally and physically, without dying; that hence he should have been patient; that it would have been better for the poor little children; that it was an act of madness for him, a wretched, weak man, violently to collar society and to imagine that a man can escape wretchedness by theft; that in any case, the door by which a man enters infamy is a bad one by which to escape from wretchedness,—and, in short, that he had been in the wrong.

Then he asked himself if he were the only person who had been in the wrong in his fatal history; whether, in the first place, it was not a serious thing that he, a workman, should want for work,—that he, industrious as he was, should want

for bread; whether, next, when the fault was committed and confessed, the punishment had not been ferocious and excessive, and if there were not more abuse on the part of the law in the penalty than there was on the side of the culprit in the crime; whether there had not been an excessive weight in one of the scales,—that one in which expiation lies; whether the excess of punishment did not efface the crime, and reverse the situation by making a victim of the culprit, a creditor of the debtor, and definitely placing the right on the side of the man who had violated it; whether this penalty, complicated by successive aggravations for attempts at escape, did not eventually become a sort of attack made by the stronger on the weaker, a crime of society committed on the individual, a crime which was renewed every day, and had lasted for nineteen years? He asked himself if human society could have the right to make its members suffer equally, on one side, from its unreasonable improvidence, on the other, from its pitiless foresight, and to hold a poor man eternally between a want and an excess,—want of work and excess of punishment; whether it were not outrageous that society should thus treat those of its members who were worst endowed in that division of property which is made by chance, and who were consequently most worthy of indulgence?

These questions asked and solved, he passed sentence on society and condemned it—to his hatred. He made it responsible for the fate he was suffering, and said to himself that he would not hesitate to call it to account some day. He declared that there was no equilibrium between the harm he had done and the harm done him; and he came to the conclusion that his punishment was not unjust, but most assuredly iniquitous. Wrath may be wild and absurd; a man may be wrongfully irritated; but he is only indignant when he has some show of reason somewhere. Jean Valjean felt indignant. And then again, human society had never done him aught but harm; he had only seen its wrathful face, which is called its justice, and which it shows to those whom it strikes. Men had only laid hands on him to injure him,

and every contact with them had been a blow. Never, since his infancy, since the time of his mother and his sister, had he heard a kind word or met a friendly look. From suffering after suffering, he gradually attained to the conviction that life was war, and that in this war he was the vanquished. As he had no weapon but his hatred, he resolved to sharpen it in the galleys and to take it with him when he left.

There was at Toulon a school for the chain-gang, kept by Ignorantine Brethren, who imparted elementary instruction to those wretches who were willing to learn. He was one of the number, and went to school at the age of forty, where he learned reading, writing, and arithmetic; he felt that to strengthen his mind was to strengthen his hatred. In certain cases, instruction and education may serve to eke out evil. It is sad to say that after judging society, which had caused his misfortunes, he judged Providence, which had made society, and condemned it also. Hence, during these nineteen years of torture and slavery, his soul ascended and descended at the same time; light entered it on one side and darkness on the other. As we have seen, Jean Valjean was not naturally bad; he was still good when he entered the galleys. He condemned society, and felt that he was growing wicked; he condemned Providence, and felt that he was growing impious.

Here it is difficult not to meditate for a moment. Can human nature be thus utterly transformed? Can man, who is created good by God, be made bad by man? Can the soul be entirely remoulded by destiny, and become evil if the destiny be evil? Can the heart be deformed, and contract incurable ugliness and infirmity under the pressure of disproportionate misfortune, like the spine beneath too low a roof? Is there not in every human soul, was there not in that of Jean Valjean especially, a primary spark, a divine element, incorruptible in this world, and immortal in the other, which good can develop, fan, kindle, and cause to glisten splendidly, and which evil can never entirely extinguish?

These are grave and obscure questions, the last of which

every physiologist would unhesitatingly have answered in the negative, had he seen at Toulon, in those hours of repose which were for Jean Valjean hours of revery, this gloomy, stern, silent, and pensive galley-slave — the pariah of the law, who regarded all men passionately; the condemned of civilization, who regarded Heaven with severity — seated with folded arms on a capstan bar, with the end of his chain thrust into his pocket to prevent it from dragging. We assuredly do not deny that the physiological observer would have seen an irremedial misery; he would probably have pitied this patient of the law, but he would not have even attempted a cure; he would have turned away from the caverns of which he caught a glimpse in this soul, and, like Dante at the gates of the Inferno, he would have erased from this existence that word which the finger of God has written on the brow of every man — *hope!*

Was this state of his soul, which we have attempted to analyze, as perfectly clear to Jean Valjean as we have tried to render it to our readers? Did Jean Valjean distinctly see after their formation, and had he seen distinctly as they were formed, all the elements which composed his moral wretchedness? Did this rude and unlettered man clearly comprehend the succession of ideas by which he had step by step ascended and descended to the gloomy views which had for so many years been the inner horizon of his mind? Was he really conscious of all that had taken place in him, and all that was stirring in him? This we should not like to assert, and, indeed, we are not inclined to believe it. Jean Valjean was so ignorant that a considerable amount of vagueness necessarily remained, even after so much misfortune; at times he did not know exactly what he felt. Jean Valjean was in darkness; he suffered in darkness, and he hated in darkness. He lived habitually in this darkness, groping like a blind man and a dreamer. At times he was attacked, both inwardly and outwardly, by a shock of passion, a surcharge of suffering, a livid flash which illumined his whole soul, and suddenly showed him, both before and behind, in the glare

of a frightful light, the hideous precipices and gloomy perspective of his destiny. When the flash had passed, night encompassed him again, and where was he? He no longer knew.

The peculiarity of punishments of this nature,—in which nought but what is pitiless, that is to say brutalizing, prevails,—is gradually, and by a sort of stupid transfiguration, to transform a man into a wild beast, at times a ferocious beast. Jean Valjean's successive and obstinate attempts to escape would be sufficient to prove the strange working of the law upon a human soul; he would have renewed these attempts, utterly useless and mad though they were, as often as opportunity offered, without for a moment, thinking of the result, or of the experiments already made. He escaped impetuously, like the wolf that finds its cage open. Instinct said to him, "Run away;" reason would have said, "Remain," but, in the presence of so violent a temptation, reason disappeared and instinct alone was left. The brute alone acted; and when he was recaptured, the fresh severities inflicted on him only served to render him more wild.

One fact we must not omit to mention is, that he possessed a physical strength with which no one in the galleys could compete. In paying out a cable or winding a capstan, Jean Valjean was equal to four men; he frequently raised and held on his back enormous weights, and at times took the place of that instrument called a jack, and formerly called *orgueil*,—from which, by the way, the Rue Montorgueil in Paris derived its name. His comrades surnamed him Jean the Jack. Once, when the balcony of the Town Hall at Toulon was being repaired, one of those admirable caryatides by Puget which support the balcony became loose and almost fell. Jean Valjean who was on the spot, supported the statue with his shoulder, and thus gave the workmen time to come up.

His agility even exceeded his strength. Some convicts, who perpetually dream of escape, eventually make a real science of combined skill and strength; it is the science of the muscles. A full course of mysterious statics is daily prac-

tised by the prisoners,—men forever envious of flies and birds. Swarming up a perpendicular surface, and finding a resting-place where scarcely a projection was to be seen, was child's play to Jean Valjean. Given a corner of a wall, with the tension of his back and legs, with his elbows and heels clinging to the rough stone, he would hoist himself as if by magic to a third story, and at times would ascend to the very roof of the galleys. He spoke little, and never laughed; it needed some extreme emotion to draw from him, once or twice a year, that melancholy laugh of the convict, which is, as it were, the echo of the laughter of a demon. To look at him, he seemed engaged in continually gazing at something terrible. He was, in fact, absorbed. Through the sickly perceptions of an incomplete nature and a crushed intellect, he saw confusedly that a monstrous thing was hanging over him. In the obscure, dull gloom through which he crawled, wherever he turned his head and essayed to raise his eye, he saw, with a terror blended with rage, built up above him, with frightfully scarp'd sides, a terrific pile of things, laws, prejudices, men, and facts, whose outlines escaped him, whose mass terrified him, and which was nothing else but that prodigious pyramid which we call civilization. He distinguished here and there in this heaving and shapeless conglomeration,—at one moment close to him, at another on distant and inaccessible plains, some vividly illumined group: here the jailor and his stick, there the police officer and his sword, yonder the mitred archbishop, and at the summit, like a sort of sun, the crowned and dazzling emperor. It seemed to him as if this distant splendour, far from dissipating his night, only rendered it blacker and gloomier. All these laws, prejudices, facts, men, and things came and went above him, in accordance with the complicated and mysterious movement which God imparts to civilization, marching over him, and crushing him with something calm in its cruelty, and inexorable in its indifference. Souls which have fallen into the lowest depths of all possible misfortune, hapless men lost in those limbos into which people no longer look, the reprobates

of the law feel on their heads the whole weight of human society, which is so formidable to those outside it, so terrific to those beneath it.

In this situation, Jean Valjean thought; and what could be the nature of his thoughts? If the grain of corn had its thoughts when ground by the mill-stone, it would doubtless think as did Jean Valjean. All these things, realities full of spectres, phantasmagoria full of reality, at last created for him a sort of inner state which is almost indescribable. At times, in the midst of his galley-slave toil, he stopped and began to think; his reason, at once ripper and more troubled than of yore, revolted. All that had happened seemed to him absurd; all that surrounded him seemed to him impossible. He said to himself that it was a dream; he looked at the overseer standing a few yards from him, and he appeared to him a phantom, until the phantom suddenly dealt him a blow with a stick. Visible nature scarce existed for him; we might almost say with truth that for Jean Valjean there was no sun, no glorious summer day, no brilliant sky, no fresh April dawn. We cannot describe the gloomy light which illumined his soul.

In conclusion, to sum up all that can be summed up and translated into positive results in what we have indicated, we will confine ourselves to stating that in nineteen years Jean Valjean, the inoffensive pruner of Faverolles, the formidable galley-slave of Toulon, had become capable, thanks to the manner in which the galleys had fashioned him, of two sorts of evil action: first, a rapid, unreflecting bad deed, entirely instinctive, and a sort of reprisal for the evil he had suffered; and, secondly, of a grave, serious, evil deed, consciously argued out and premeditated with the false ideas which such a misfortune can produce. His premeditations passed through the three successive phases which natures of a certain temperament can alone undergo,—reasoning, will, and obstinacy. His motives were habitual indignation, bitterness of soul, a profound sense of iniquities endured, and a reaction even against the good, the innocent, and the just, if such

exist. The starting-point, like the goal, of all his thoughts was hatred of human law, that hatred, which, if it be not arrested in its development by some providential incident, becomes within a given time a hatred of society, then a hatred of the human race, next a hatred of creation, and which is expressed by a vague, incessant, and brutal desire to injure some one, no matter whom. As we see, it was not unfairly that the passport described Jean Valjean as a highly dangerous man. Year by year his soul had withered, slowly but fatally. A dry heart must have a dry eye; and when he left the galleys, nineteen years had elapsed since he had shed a tear.

CHAPTER VIII

THE WAVE AND THE SHADOW

MAN overboard! What matter! the vessel does not stop; the wind blows, and that dark ship must keep her course. She sails on. The man disappears, then re-appears; he sinks, and rises again to the surface; he calls; he waves his arms, but no one hears. The ship, trembling beneath the hurricane, strains and works in every timber; the sailors and the passengers do not even see the castaway; his wretched head is only a speck in the immensity of the billows.

He hurls cries of despair into the depths around him. What a spectre is that retreating sail! He stares at it,—stares at it with frenzy, as it is lost in the distance, fades, and disappears. He was on board just now, he was one of the crew, he moved about the deck like the others, he had his share of air and sunlight, he was a living thing. Now what has happened? He slipped, he fell, and all is over. He is in the monstrous waves, with nothing under his feet but the running, rushing water.

The waves, torn and rent by the wind, are a hideous environment; the swell of the abyss bears him away; the ragged spray dashes over his head; populace of waves spits upon him; dark depths half swallow him; every time he sinks he has glimpses of precipices full of night; frightful forms of unknown vegetation seize him, bind his feet, drag him down to them; he feels that he is becoming part of the abyss, part of the foam; the billows toss him from one to the other; he drinks the bitter brine; the cowardly ocean strives to drown him, and immensity plays with his agony; it seems as if all this water were so much hate. He struggles, however. He struggles to save himself, to keep himself afloat; he makes an effort, he swims. That paltry force, just now exhausted, combats the inexhaustible. Where is the ship? Yonder, scarce visible in the pale shadows of the horizon. The storm gusts smite him, the foam of every wave overwhelms him; he raises his eyes and sees only the livid masses of the clouds. In the agony of death, he feels and shares the measureless madness of the sea. He is tortured by this madness, he hears sounds strange to human ears, which seem to come from the other side of the earth, and from some mysterious and terrible region beyond. There are birds in the clouds, just as there are angels high above human sorrows; but what can they do for him? The bird flies, sings, and soars; and he,—he has the death-rattle in his throat. He feels himself doubly buried in those two infinities: sea and sky,—the one his tomb, the other his shroud. Night descends; he has been swimming for hours; his strength is at an end. That ship,—that far-away thing where there are men,—is blotted out; he is alone in the awful twilight-gulf. He sinks, he stiffens himself, he struggles, he feels below him the monstrous billows of the invisible. He shouts aloud!

“There are no more men. Where is God?” he shouts aloud. “Help! Help!” he shouts incessantly. Nothing on the horizon, nothing in heaven. He implores the expanse of waters, the waves, the sea-weed, the shoals; but they are deaf. He calls on the tempest to succour, but the imper-

turbable tempest obeys the Infinite alone. Around him are darkness, sea-fog, solitude, stormy and unconscious tumult, and the ill-defined furrows of fierce waters. In his breast are horror and fatigue, beneath him the abyss without a foothold. He dreams of the fearful adventures of the corpse in the limitless realm of shadow. Cold immeasurable paralyzes him, and his hands shrivel up, close, and grasp nothingness. Winds, clouds, gusts, breezes, stars, all useless! What is to be done? He abandons himself in his despair, and in his weariness chooses death,—lets himself drift and drive; he yields, and is whirled forever in the dreary depths that swallow him up.

O implacable march of human society! Lost men and lost souls along the road — ocean into which falls all that the law lets slip. Disastrous disappearance of help. O moral death! The sea is the inexorable social night into which the penal code flings its condemned; the sea is infinite wretchedness. The soul drifting in its eddies may become a corpse. Who will reanimate it?

CHAPTER IX

NEW WRONGS

WHEN the hour to quit the galleys came, when Jean Valjean heard in his ear the unfamiliar words, “You are free,” the moment seemed improbable and unprecedented, and a ray of bright light,—of the true light of the living,—suddenly penetrated to him; but it soon paled. Jean Valjean had been dazzled by the idea of liberty, and had believed in a new life; but he soon saw what sort of liberty it is to which a yellow passport is granted. And this was encompassed with much bitterness; he had calculated that his earnings during his stay in the galleys would amount to one hun-

dred and seventy-one francs. We are bound to add that he had omitted to take into his calculations the forced rest of Sundays and holidays, which, during nineteen years, entailed a diminution of about twenty-four francs. However this might be, the sum was reduced, by various local stoppages, to one hundred and nine francs, fifteen sous, which were paid to him when he left the galleys. He did not understand it all, and fancied that he had been robbed.

On the day after his liberation, he saw, at Grasse, in front of a distillery of orange-flower water, men unloading bales; he offered his services, and as the work was of a pressing nature, they were accepted. He set to work. He was intelligent, strong, and skilful; he did his best, and his master appeared satisfied. While he was at work a policeman passed, noticed him, asked for his papers, and he was compelled to show his yellow passport. This done, Jean Valjean resumed his toil. A little while before, he had asked one of the workmen what he earned for his day's work, and the answer was thirty sous. At night, as he was compelled to start again the next morning, he went to the master of the distillery and asked to be paid. The master did not say a word, but gave him fifteen sous; and when he protested, the answer was, "That is enough for you." He insisted; the man looked him in the face and said, "Mind you don't get into prison."

Here again he regarded himself as robbed; society, the State, by diminishing his earnings, had robbed him wholesale; now it was the turn of the individual to commit retail robbery. Liberation is not deliverance; a man may be freed from the galleys, but not from his sentence. This is what happened to him at Grasse, and we know how he was treated at D——.

CHAPTER X

THE MAN AROUSED

AS two o'clock pealed from the cathedral bell, Jean Valjean awoke. What aroused him was that the bed was too comfortable. For close on twenty years he had not slept in a bed; and, though he had not undressed, the sensation was too novel not to disturb his slumbers. He had been asleep for more than four hours, and his weariness had worn off; he was not accustomed to grant many hours to repose. He opened his eyes and looked into the surrounding darkness, then he closed them again to sleep once more. When many diverse sensations have agitated a day, and when various matters preoccupy the mind, a man may sleep, but he cannot go to sleep again. Sleep comes more easily than it returns; and this happened to Jean Valjean. As he could not go to sleep again, he began to think.

It was one of those moments in which the ideas that occupy the mind are troubled, and there was a sort of obscure confusion in his brain. His old memories and his newer memories crossed each other, and floated hither and thither, losing their shape, growing enormously, and then disappearing suddenly, as if in a troubled and muddy pool. Many thoughts occurred to him, but there was one which constantly recurred and expelled all the rest. This thought we will at once mention; he had noticed the six silver forks and spoons and the great ladle which Madame Magloire put on the table. This plate haunted him; it was there,—a few yards from him. When he crossed the adjoining room to reach the one in which he now was, the old servant was putting it in a small cupboard at the bed-head. He had carefully noted this cupboard; it was on the right as you came in from the dining-room. The plate was heavy and old; the big soup-ladle was worth at least two hundred francs, or double what he had

earned in nineteen years, though it was true that he would have earned more had not the officials robbed him.

His mind wavered for a good hour in these vacillations with which some struggle was most assuredly blended. When three o'clock struck he opened his eyes, suddenly sat up, stretched out his arm, and felt for his knapsack which he had thrown into a corner of the alcove, then let his legs hang, put his feet on the floor, and found himself seated on the bed almost without knowing how. He remained for a while thoughtfully in this attitude, which would have had something sinister about it to any one who had seen him,—the only wakeful person in the sleeping house. All at once he stooped, took off his shoes, and placed them softly on the mat beside the bed, then resumed his thoughtful posture and remained motionless. In the midst of this hideous meditation the ideas which we have indicated incessantly crossed his brain, entered, went out, returned, and oppressed him; and then he thought also, without knowing why, and with the mechanical persistency of revery, of a convict he had known at the galleys, named Brevet, whose trousers were only held up by a single knitted brace. The checkered pattern of that brace incessantly recurred to his mind. He remained in this situation, and would probably have remained so till sunrise, had not the clock struck the quarter or the half hour. It seemed as if this stroke said to him, "To work!" He rose, hesitated for a moment and listened; all was silent in the house, and he went on tiptoe to the window, through which he peered. The night was not very dark; there was a full moon, across which heavy clouds were chased by the wind. This produced alternations of light and shade outside, and in the room a sort of twilight; this twilight, sufficient to guide him, but intermittent in consequence of the clouds, resembled that livid hue which falls through a cellar grating over which people are continually passing. On reaching the window, Jean Valjean examined it; it was without bars, looked on the garden, and was only fastened, according to the fashion of the country, by a small peg. He opened it, but as a cold, sharp breeze

suddenly entered the room, he closed it again directly. He gazed into the garden with that attentive glance which studies rather than looks, and found that it was enclosed by a low whitewashed wall, easy to climb. Beyond it, at the end of the garden, he noticed the tops of trees standing at regular distances, which proved that this wall separated the garden from a public walk or avenue.

After taking this glance, he started like a man who has made up his mind, walked boldly to the alcove, opened his knapsack, fumbled in it, took out something which he laid on the bed, put his shoes in one of the pockets, shut it up again, placed it on his shoulders, put on his cap, pulled the visor down over his eyes, groped for his stick, which he laid on the window-sill, then returned to the bed, and resolutely seized the object he had laid there. It resembled a short iron bar, sharpened at one end like a spear. It would have been hard to tell in the darkness for what purpose this piece of iron had been fashioned; perhaps it was a crowbar, perhaps it was a club. By daylight it could have been seen that it was nothing but a miners' candlestick. The convicts at that day were sometimes employed to quarry rock from the lofty hills that surround Toulon, and it was not uncommon for them to have mining-tools at their disposal. The miners' candlesticks are made of massive iron, and have a point at the lower end, by which they are stuck into the rock. He took the candlestick in his right hand, and, holding his breath and deadening his footsteps, he walked toward the door of the adjoining room,—the bishop's, as we know. On reaching this door he found it ajar; the bishop had not shut it.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT HE DOES

JEAN VALJEAN listened, but there was not a sound; he pushed the door lightly with the tip of his finger, with the furtive, restless gentleness of a cat that wants to get in. The door yielded to the pressure, and made an almost imperceptible and silent movement, which slightly widened the opening. He waited for a moment, and then pushed the door again more boldly. It continued to yield silently, and the opening was soon large enough for him to pass through; but near the door was a small table which formed an awkward angle with it, and barred the entrance.

Jean Valjean saw the difficulty; the opening must be increased at all hazards. He made up his mind, and pushed the door a third time, more energetically still. This time a badly oiled hinge suddenly uttered a hoarse, prolonged squeak in the darkness. Jean Valjean started; the noise smote his ear startlingly and terribly, as if it were the trumpet of the day of judgment. In the fantastic exaggeration of the first minute, he almost imagined that the hinge had become animated, suddenly obtained a terrible vitality, and barked like a dog to warn and awaken the sleepers. He stopped, shuddering and dismayed, and fell back from tiptoes on his heels. The arteries in his temples beat like two forge-hammers, and it seemed to him that his breath issued from his lungs with the noise of the wind roaring out of a cavern. He fancied that the horrible clamour of that irritated hinge must have startled the whole house like a shock of an earthquake; that the door he opened was alarmed and cried for help; the old man would rise, the two aged women would shriek, and help would come; in less than a quarter of an hour the town would be astir, and the police turn out. For a moment he believed himself lost.

He remained where he was, petrified like the pillar of salt, and not daring to make a movement. A few minutes passed, the door was wide open. He ventured to look into the room, and found that nothing had stirred. He listened; no one was moving in the house, the creaking of the rusty hinge had not awakened any one. The first danger had passed; still there was a fearful tumult within him. But he did not recoil; he had not done so even when he thought himself lost. His only thought now was to finish the job as speedily as possible. He took a step and entered the bedroom. The room was in a state of perfect calm; here and there were confused, vague forms, which by daylight were papers, scattered over the table, open folios, books piled on a stool, an easy-chair covered with clothes, and a prie-dieu, all of which were at this moment only dark nooks and patches of white. Jean Valjean advanced cautiously and carefully, and avoided coming into collision with the furniture. He heard at the end of the room the calm and regular breathing of the sleeping bishop. Suddenly he stopped, for he was close to the bed; he had reached it sooner than he anticipated.

Nature at times blends her effects and spectacles with our actions with a gloomy and intelligent appropriateness, as if wishing to make us reflect. For nearly half an hour a heavy cloud had covered the sky, but when Jean Valjean stopped at the foot of the bed, this cloud was rent asunder as if expressly, and a moonbeam passing through the long window suddenly illumined the bishop's pale face. He was sleeping peacefully, and, to protect himself from the cold nights of the Lower Alps, was wrapped in a loose garment of brown wool, which covered his arms down to the wrists. His head was thrown back on the pillow in the easy attitude of repose; his hand, adorned with the pastoral ring, and which had done so many good deeds, hung over the edge of the bed. His whole face was lit up by a vague expression of satisfaction, hope, and beatitude,—it was more than a smile and almost a radiance. His forehead bore the indescribable reflection of an invisible light; for the soul of a just man contemplates a

mysterious heaven during sleep. A reflection of this heaven was cast over the bishop, but it was at the same time a luminous transparency; for the heaven was within him, and was his conscience.

When the moonbeam was cast over this inner light, the sleeping bishop seemed surrounded by a glory, which was veiled, however, by an ineffable half-light. The moon in the heavens, the slumbering landscape, the peaceful garden, the quiet house, the hour, the silence, the moment, added something solemn and unspeakable to this man's venerable repose, and cast a majestic and serene halo round his white hair and closed eyes, his face, in which all was hope and confidence, his aged head, and his infantile slumbers. There was something almost divine in this unconsciously august man. Jean Valjean stood in the shadow with his crowbar in his hand, motionless and terrified by this luminous old man. He had never seen anything like this before, and such confidence horrified him. The moral world has no grander spectacle than this,—a troubled, restless conscience, which is on the point of committing a bad action, contemplating the sleep of a just man.

This sleep in such isolation, and with a neighbour like himself, possessed a sublimity which he felt vaguely, but imperiously. No one could have said what was going on within him, not even himself. In order to form any idea of it, we must imagine the most violent things in the presence of the gentlest. Even in his face nothing could have been distinguished with certainty, for it displayed a sort of haggard astonishment. He looked at the bishop, that was all; but what his thoughts were it would be impossible to divine. It was evident that he was moved and shaken, but of what nature was his emotion? His eye was not once removed from the old man, and the only thing clearly revealed by his attitude and countenance was a strange indecision. It seemed as if he were hesitating between two abysses,—the one that saves and the one that destroys; he was ready to dash out the bishop's brains or to kiss his hand. At the expiration of a few minutes his left arm slowly rose to his cap, which he took off; then his arm



"Jean Valjean stood in the shadow with his crowbar in his hand, motionless and terrified by this luminous old man."

Les Misérables. Fantine: Page 112.

fell back with the same deliberation, and Jean Valjean resumed his contemplation, his cap in his left hand, his crowbar in his right, and his hair standing erect on his savage head.

The bishop continued to sleep peacefully beneath that terrific gaze. A moonbeam rendered the crucifix over the mantelpiece dimly visible; it seemed to open its arms to both of them, with a blessing for one and pardon for the other. All at once Jean Valjean put on his cap again, walked rapidly by the bed without looking at the bishop, and went straight to the cupboard. He raised his iron candlestick as if to force the lock, but as the key was in it, he opened it, and the first thing he saw was the plate-basket, which he seized. He hurried across the room, regardless of the noise that he made, re-entered the oratory, opened the window, seized his stick, bestrode the window-sill, put the silver in his knapsack, threw away the basket, leaped into the garden, bounded over the wall like a tiger, and fled.

CHAPTER XII

THE BISHOP AT WORK

THE next morning at sunrise Monseigneur Bienvenu was walking about the garden, when Madame Magloire came running toward him in a state of great alarm.

"Monseigneur, Monseigneur, Monseigneur!" she screamed, "does your Eminence know where the silver-basket is?"

"Yes," said the bishop.

"The Lord be praised," she continued; "I did not know what had become of it."

The bishop had just picked up the basket in a flower-bed, and now handed it to Madame Magloire. "Here it is," he said.

"Well!" she said, "there is nothing in it; where is the silver?"

"Ah!" the bishop replied, "so it is the silver that troubles your mind. Well, I do not know where that is."

"Good Lord! it is stolen, and that man who came last night is the robber."

In a twinkling, with all the vivacity of alarm, Madame Magloire had run to the oratory, entered the alcove, and returned to the bishop. He was stooping down and sighing as he looked at a cochlearia, whose stem the basket had broken in falling on the bed. He raised himself on hearing Madame Magloire scream:—

"Monseigneur, the man has gone! the silver is stolen!"

As she uttered this exclamation, her eyes fell on a corner of the garden where there were signs of climbing; the coping of the wall had been torn away.

"That is the way he went! He leaped into Cocheffet Lane. Ah, what a scoundrel! he has stolen our silver!"

The bishop was silent for a moment, then raised his earnest eyes, and said gently to Madame Magloire:—

"In the first place, was that silver ours?"

Madame Magloire was speechless; there was another interval of silence, after which the bishop continued:—

"Madame Magloire, I have long wrongfully held back this silver, which belonged to the poor. Who was this person? Plainly a poor man."

"Good gracious!" returned Madame Magloire, "I do not care for it, nor does your sister; but we feel for Monseigneur. What will you eat with now?"

The bishop looked at her in amazement. "Why, are there no pewter plates to be had?"

Madame Magloire shrugged her shoulders. "Pewter smells!"

"Then iron!"

Madame Magloire made an expressive grimace. "Iron tastes."

"Well, then," said the bishop, "wood!"

A few minutes later he was breakfasting at the same table at which Jean Valjean sat on the previous evening. While breakfasting Monseigneur Bienvenu remarked gayly to his sister, who said nothing, and to Madame Magloire, who grumbled under her breath, that spoon and fork, even of wood, are not required to dip a piece of bread in a cup of milk.

"What an idea!" said Madame Magloire, as she went backward and forward, "to take in a man like that, and lodge him by one's side. And what a blessing it is that he only stole! Oh, Lord! the mere thought makes a body shudder."

As the brother and sister were leaving the table, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said the bishop.

The door opened, and a strange group appeared on the threshold. Three men were holding a fourth by the collar. The three men were police officers, the fourth was Jean Valjean. The officer in command of the party came in, and walked up to the bishop with a military salute.

"Monseigneur," he said.

At this word Jean Valjean, who was crushed and dejected, raised his head with a stupefied air.

"Monseigneur!" he muttered; "then he is not the priest."

"Silence!" said an officer. "This gentleman is the bishop."

Meantime Monseigneur Bienvenu advanced as rapidly as his great age permitted.

"Ah! there you are," he said, looking at Jean Valjean. "I am glad to see you. Why, how is this? I gave you the candlesticks too, which are also silver, and will fetch two hundred francs. Why did you not take them away with the rest of the plate?"

Jean Valjean opened his eyes and looked at the bishop with an expression which no human tongue could describe.

"Monseigneur," said the officer, "what this man told us was true then? We met him, and as he looked as if he were running away, we arrested him. He had this plate—"

"And he told you," the bishop interrupted, with a smile,

"that it was given to him by a good old priest at whose house he passed the night? I see it all. And you brought him back here? It is a mistake."

"In that case," continued the officer, "we can let him go?"

"Of course," answered the bishop.

The officers loosed their hold of Jean Valjean, who tottered back.

"Is it true that I am at liberty?" he said, in an almost inarticulate voice, and as if speaking in his sleep.

"Yes, you are free; don't you understand?" said an officer.

"My friend," continued the bishop, "before you go, take your candlesticks."

He went to the mantlepiece, fetched the two candlesticks, and handed them to Jean Valjean. The two women watched him without a word, without a sign, without a look that could disturb him. Jean Valjean trembled in every limb; he took the candlesticks mechanically, and with a bewildered air.

"Now," said the bishop, "go in peace. By the bye, when you return, my friend, it is unnecessary to pass through the garden, for you can always enter and depart, day and night, by the front door, which is only latched."

Then, turning to the officers, he said:—

"Gentlemen, you may retire."

They did so. Jean Valjean looked as if he were on the point of fainting; the bishop walked up to him and said in a low voice:—

"Never forget that you have promised me to use this money to become an honest man."

Jean Valjean, who had no recollection of having promised anything, stood silent. The bishop, who had laid a stress on these words, continued solemnly:—

"Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil, but to good. I have bought your soul of you. I withdraw it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and give it to God."

CHAPTER XIII

LITTLE GERVAIS

JEAN VALJEAN left the town as if running away; he walked hastily across the fields, taking such roads and paths as offered themselves, without perceiving that he was constantly retracing his steps. He wandered thus the entire morning, and though he had eaten nothing, he did not feel hungry. He was a prey to countless novel sensations; he felt a sort of rage, but he did not know against whom. He could not have said whether he was touched or humiliated; at times a strange tenderness came over him, against which he strove, and to which he opposed the hardness learned in the last twenty years. This condition exhausted him, and he saw with alarm that the frightful calm, which the injustice of his misfortune had produced, was giving way. He asked himself what would take its place; at times he would have preferred being in prison and with the police, and that things had not happened thus; for that would have agitated him less. Although the season was advanced, there were still here and there in the hedges a few laggard flowers, whose smell recalled childhood's memories as he passed them. These recollections were almost unendurable, for it was so long since they had recurred to him.

Indescribable thoughts congregated within him the whole day through. When the sun was setting and casting long shadows on the ground from every little pebble, Jean Valjean sat behind a bush in a large, tawny, and utterly deserted plain. There were only the Alps on the horizon; there was not even the steeple of a distant village. Jean Valjean might be about three leagues from D——, and a path that crossed the plain ran a few paces from the bushes. In the midst of his meditations, which would have contributed no little to render his rags formidable to any one who saw him, he heard

a merry sound. He turned his head and beheld a little Savoyard about ten years of age coming along the path, singing, with his hurdy-gurdy at his side and his marmot-box on his back. He was one of those gentle, cheerful lads who go from country to country, displaying their knees through the holes in their trousers.

As he sang, the lad stopped every now and then to play at pitch and toss with some coins he held in his hand, which were probably his entire fortune. Among these coins was a two-franc piece. The lad stopped by the side of the bushes without seeing Jean Valjean, and threw up the handful of sous, all of which he had hitherto always caught skilfully on the back of his hand. This time the two-franc piece fell, and rolled through the bushes toward Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean placed his foot upon it; but the boy had looked after the coin, and seen him. He did not seem surprised, but walked straight up to the man. It was an utterly lonely spot; as far as the eye could reach, there was no one on the plain or the path. Nothing was audible, save the faint cries of a swarm of birds of passage passing through the sky, at an immense height. The boy had his back to the sun, which wove golden threads in his hair, and suffused Jean Valjean's savage face with a purplish, blood-red hue.

"Sir," said the little Savoyard, with that childish confidence which is composed of ignorance and innocence, "my coin?"

"What is your name?" said Jean Valjean.

"Little Gervais, sir."

"Be off!" said Jean Valjean.

"Give me my coin, if you please, sir."

Jean Valjean hung his head, but said nothing.

The boy began again:—

"My two-franc piece, sir."

Jean Valjean's eye remained fixed on the ground.

"My coin," cried the boy; "my silver piece, my money!"

It seemed as if Jean Valjean did not hear him, for the boy seized the collar of his blouse and shook him, and at the

same time made an effort to remove the iron-shod shoe placed on his coin.

"I want my money, my forty-sous piece."

The boy began to cry, and Jean Valjean raised his head. He was still sitting on the ground, and his eyes were misty. He looked at the lad with a sort of amazement, then stretched forth his hand to his stick, and shouted in a terrible voice, "Who is there?"

"I, sir," replied the boy,—"little Gervais. Give me back my two francs, if you please. Take away your foot, sir, if you please." Then he grew angry, though so little, and almost threatening. "Come, will you lift up your foot? Lift up your foot, I say!"

"Ah, it is you still," said Jean Valjean; and springing up, with his foot still on the coin, he added, "Will you be off or not?"

The startled boy looked at him, then began to tremble from head to foot, and after a few moments of stupor ran off at full speed, without daring to look back or to utter a cry. Still, when he had got a certain distance, want of breath forced him to stop, and Jean Valjean in the midst of his reverie could hear him sobbing. In a few minutes the boy had disappeared. The sun had set, and darkness collected around Jean Valjean. He had eaten nothing all day, and was probably in a fever. He had remained standing, and had not changed his attitude since the boy ran off. His breath heaved his chest at long and irregular intervals; his eye, fixed ten or twelve yards ahead, seemed studying with profound attention the shape of an old fragment of blue earthenware which had fallen in the grass. Suddenly he started, for he felt the night chill; he pulled his cap over his forehead, mechanically tried to cross and button his blouse, took a step forward, and stooped to pick up his stick.

At this moment he perceived the two-franc piece, which his foot had half-buried in the turf, and which glistened among the pebbles. It had the effect of a galvanic shock upon him. "What is this?" he muttered. He fell back

three paces, then stopped, unable to take his eye from the spot his foot had trodden a moment before, as if the thing glistening there in the darkness had been an open eye riveted upon him. In a few moments he dashed convulsively at the coin, picked it up, and looked out into the plain, glancing in every direction, and shuddering like a terrified wild beast in search of shelter.

He saw nothing; night was falling, the plain was cold and indistinct, and heavy violet mists rose in the twilight. He said, "Oh!" and set out rapidly in the direction in which the lad had gone. After going some thirty yards, he stopped, looked, and saw nothing; then he shouted with all his strength, "Little Gervais, little Gervais!" He paused, and waited, but there was no response. The country was deserted and gloomy, and he was surrounded by space. There was nothing but darkness in which his gaze was lost, and silence in which his voice was lost. An icy breeze was blowing, and imparted to things around a sort of mournful life. The bushes shook their little thin arms with incredible fury; they seemed to be threatening and pursuing some one.

He walked onward, and then began to run; but from time to time he stopped, and shouted into the solitude with the most fearful and agonizing voice imaginable, "Little Gervais, little Gervais!" Assuredly, if the boy had heard him, he would have felt frightened, and not have shown himself; but the lad was doubtless a long way off by this time. The convict met a priest on horseback, to whom he went up and said:—

"Mr. Priest, have you seen a lad pass?"

"No," replied the priest.

"A lad of the name of 'Little Gervais?'"

"I have seen nobody."

The convict took two five-franc pieces from his pouch and handed them to the priest.

"Mr. Priest, this is for your poor. He was a boy about ten years old, with a marmot, I think, and a hurdy-gurdy, — a Savoyard, you know."

"I did not see him."

"Can you tell me if there is any one of the name of Little Gervais in the villages about here?"

"If it is as you say, my good fellow, the lad is a stranger. Many of them pass this way. We know nothing of them."

Jean Valjean snatched two more five-franc pieces from his bag and gave them to the priest.

"For your poor," he said; then added wildly, "Mr. Priest, have me arrested; I am a robber."

The priest urged on his horse, and rode away in great alarm, while Jean Valjean set off running in the direction he had first taken. He went on for a long distance, looking, calling, and shouting, but he met no one else. Twice or thrice he ran across the plain to something that appeared to be a person lying or sitting down; but he only found heather, or rocks level with the ground. At last he stopped where three paths met; the moon had risen; he looked far off, and called out for the last time, "Little Gervais, little Gervais, little Gervais!" His shout died away in the mist, without even awakening an echo. He muttered again, "Little Gervais," in a weak and almost inarticulate voice, but it was his last effort. His knees suddenly gave way under him as if an invisible power were crushing him beneath the weight of a bad conscience. He fell exhausted on a large stone, with his hands clenched in his hair, his face on his knees, and shrieked, "I am a wretch!" Then his heart melted, and he began to weep; it was the first time for nineteen years.

When Jean Valjean quitted the bishop's house, he was lifted out of his former thoughts, and could not account for what was going on within him. He hardened himself against the angelic deeds and gentle words of the old man: "You have promised me to become an honest man. I buy your soul; I withdraw it from the spirit of perverseness, and give it to God." This incessantly recurred to him, and he opposed to this celestial kindness that pride which is the fortress of evil within us. He felt instinctively that this priest's forgiveness was the greatest and most formidable assault by

which he had yet been shaken; that his obduracy would be permanent if he resisted this clemency; that if he yielded he must renounce that hatred with which the actions of other men had filled his soul for so many years, and which pleased him; that this time he must either conquer or be vanquished; and that the struggle, a colossal and final struggle, had begun between his wickedness and that man's goodness.

In the presence of all these lights, he walked on like a drunken man. While he went on thus with haggard eye, had he any distinct perception of what the result of his adventure at D—— might be? Did he hear all those mysterious murmurs which warn or importune the mind at certain moments of life? Did a voice whisper in his ear that he had just passed through the most solemn hour of his destiny; that no middle course was now left him; and that if he were not henceforth the best of men he would be the worst; that he must now rise higher than the bishop, or sink lower than the galley-slave; that if he wished to be good he must become an angel; and that if he wished to remain wicked he must become a monster?

Here we must again ask the question we have already asked: Had he any confused mental shadow of all this? Assuredly, as we have said, misfortune educates the intellect; still it is doubtful whether Jean Valjean were in a state to draw the conclusions we have formed. If these ideas reached him, he had a glimpse of them rather than saw them; and they only succeeded in throwing him into an indescribable and almost painful trouble. On leaving that shapeless black thing which is called the galleys, the bishop had hurt his soul, in the same way that too brilliant a light would have hurt his eyes on coming out of darkness.

The future life, the possible life, which presented itself to him, all pure and radiant; filled him with tremor and anxiety, and he no longer knew how he really stood. Like an owl that suddenly witnessed a sunrise, the convict had been dazzled, and, as it were, blinded by virtue.

One thing which he did not suspect, is certain, however,—that he was no longer the same man. All was changed in him; and it was no longer in his power to get rid of the fact that the bishop had spoken to him and taken his hand. While in this mental condition he met Little Gervais, and robbed him of his two francs. Why? He certainly could not explain it. Was it the final and supreme effort of the evil thoughts which he had brought from the galleys, a remnant of impulse, a result of what is called in statics “acquired momentum”? It was this, and was perhaps also even less than this. Let us say it simply: it was not he who robbed,—it was not the man, but the brute beast that through habit and instinct stupidly placed its foot on the coin, while the intellect was struggling with such novel and extraordinary sensations. When the intellect woke again and saw this brutish action, Jean Valjean recoiled with agony, and uttered a cry of horror. It was a curious phenomenon, and one only possible in his present situation, that, in robbing the boy of that money, he committed a deed of which he was no longer capable.

However this may be, this last bad action had a decisive effect upon him; it suddenly darted through the chaos which filled his mind and dissipated it, placed on one side the dark mists, on the other the light, and acted on his soul, in its present condition, as certain chemical re-agents act upon a troubled mixture, by precipitating one element and clarifying another. At first, before even examining himself or reflecting, he wildly strove to find the boy again and return his money; then, when he perceived that this was useless and impossible, he stopped in despair. When he exclaimed, “I am a wretch!” he saw himself as he really was, and was already so separated from himself that he fancied himself merely a phantom, and that he had there before him, in flesh and blood, cudgel in hand, his blouse on his back, his knapsack full of stolen objects, the frightful galley-slave, Jean Valjean, with his resolute and gloomy face, and his mind full of hideous schemes.

As we have remarked, excess of misfortune had made him to some extent a visionary, and this, therefore, was a sort of vision. He really saw that Jean Valjean with his sinister face, and almost asked himself who this man was who so horrified him. His brain was in that violent and yet frightfully calm stage when the revery is so deep that it absorbs reality. He contemplated himself, so to speak, face to face; and at the same time he saw through this hallucination, in a mysterious depth, a light which he at first took for a torch. On looking more attentively at this light which appeared to his conscience, he perceived that it had a human shape, and that the torch was the bishop. His conscience examined in turn the two men standing before him,—the bishop and Jean Valjean. By one of those singular effects peculiar to an ecstasy of this nature, the more his revery was prolonged, the taller and more brilliant the bishop appeared, while Jean Valjean grew less, and faded out of sight. At length he disappeared and the bishop alone remained, filling the wretched man's soul with magnificent radiance.

Jean Valjean wept for a long time. He wept hot tears, and sobbed with more weakness than a woman, more terror than a child. While he wept, the light grew brighter in his brain,—an extraordinary light, at once ravishing and terrible. His past life, his first fault, his long expiation, his outward brutishness, his inward hardness, his liberation, accompanied by so many plans of vengeance, what had happened at the bishop's, the last thing he had done, the robbery of the boy (a crime the more cowardly and monstrous because it took place after the bishop's forgiveness),—all this recurred to him, but in a light which he had never before seen. He looked at his life, and it appeared to him horrible; at his soul, and it appeared to him frightful. Still a soft light was shed over both, and he fancied that he saw Satan in the light of paradise.

How many hours did he weep thus? What did he do afterward? Whither did he go? No one ever knew. It was stated, however, that on that very night the mail-carrier

from Grenoble, who reached D—— at about three A. M., as he passed through the street where the bishop's palace stood, saw a man kneeling on the pavement in the attitude of prayer in front of Monseigneur Bienvenu's door.

BOOK III

IN THE YEAR 1817

CHAPTER I

THE YEAR 1817

LOUIS XVIII., with a certain royal assurance not destitute of pride, entitled the year 1817 the twenty-second of his reign. It is the year in which M. Bruguière de Sorsum was known to fame. All the wig-makers' shops, hoping for powder and the return of the royal bird, were daubed with azure and fleurs-de-lis. Those were the innocent days when Count Lynch sat every Sunday as church-warden at St. Germain-des-Près in the dress of a peer of France, with his red ribbon, his long nose, and that majestic profile peculiar to a man who has done a brilliant deed. The brilliant deed done by M. Lynch was having, when mayor of Bordeaux, surrendered the town rather prematurely on March 12, 1814, to the Duke d'Angoulême; hence his peerage. In 1817, fashion buried little boys of the age of six and seven beneath vast morocco leather caps with ear-flaps much resembling Esquimaux fur bonnets. The French army was dressed in white, like the Austrian; the regiments were called legions, and bore the names of departments instead of numbers. Napoleon was at St. Helena; and as England refused him green cloth, he had his old coats turned. In 1817 Pellegrini sang, and Mlle. Bigottini danced, Potier reigned, and Odry was not yet known. Madame Saqui had succeeded Forioso.

There were still Prussians in France. Delalot was a personage. Legitimacy had just asserted itself by cutting off the hand and then the head of Pleignier, Carbonneau, and Tolleron. Prince Talleyrand, lord high chamberlain, and the Abbé Louis, minister of finance, looked at each other and laughed like two augurs. Both had celebrated on July 14, 1790, the mass of federation in the Champ de Mars. Talleyrand had read it as bishop, Louis had served it as deacon. In 1817, in the side alleys of that same Champ de Mars, could be seen large wooden cylinders, lying in the wet and rotting in the grass, painted blue, with traces of eagles and bees, which had lost their gilding. These were the columns which two years before supported the Emperor's balcony at the Champ de Mai. They were partly blackened by the bivouac fires of the Austrians encamped near Gros Caillou; two or three of the columns had disappeared in the bivouac fires, and warmed the coarse hands of the imperial troops. The Field of May had this remarkable thing about it, that it was held in the month of June, and on the Field of March. In 1817, two things were popular,—the Voltaire-Touquet and the "charter" snuff-box. The latest Parisian sensation was the crime of Dautun, who threw his brother's head into the fountain on the Flower Market. People at the admiralty were beginning to grow anxious because there was no news from that fatal frigate the "Medusa," which was destined to cover Chaumareix with shame and Géricault with glory. Colonel Selves went to Egypt and became Soliman Pacha. The palace of Thermes, in the Rue de la Harpe, served as a shop for a cooper. On the platform of the octagonal tower of the Hotel de Cluny could still be seen the small wooden hut which had served as an observatory for Messier, naval astronomer under Louis XVI. The Duchess de Duras was reading her unpublished romance of "Ourika" to three or four friends, in her boudoir furnished in sky-blue satin by X. The N's were scratched off the Louvre, the Austerlitz bridge abdicated, and was called the King's Garden bridge,—a double enigma, which at once disguised the Austerlitz bridge

and the Jardin des Plantes. Louis XVIII., while annotating Horace with his finger-nail, was troubled by heroes who made themselves emperors, and cobblers who made themselves dauphins; he had two objects of anxiety,—Napoleon and Mathurin Bruneau. The French academy offered as subject for the prize essay, “The happiness produced by study.” M. Bellart was officially eloquent; and in his shadow could be seen sprouting that future Advocate-General de Broë, dedicated to the sarcasms of Paul Louis Courier. There was a false Châteaubriand called Marchangy, while waiting till there should be a false Marchangy called D’Arlincourt. “Claire d’Albe” and “Malek Adel” were masterpieces; and Madame Cottin was declared the first writer of the age. The Institute erased from its lists the academician Napoleon Bonaparte. A royal decree constituted Angoulême a naval school; for, as the Duke d’Angoulême was lord high admiral, it was evident that the city from which he derived his title possessed *de jure* all the qualifications of a seaport; if not, the monarchical principle would be invaded. In the council of ministers the question was discussed whether the wood-cuts representing mountebanks, which adorned Franconi’s posters and caused street scamps to congregate, should be tolerated. M. Paër, author of “Agnese,” a square-faced man with a wart on his chin, directed the private concerts of the Marchioness de Sassenaye in the Rue de la Ville d’Evêque. All the young ladies were singing “The Hermit of Saint Avelle,” words by Edmond Géraud. “The Yellow Dwarf” was transformed into “The Mirror.” The Café Lemblin stood up for the Emperor against the Café Valois, which supported the Bourbons. The Duke de Berry, at whom Louvel already gazed from the darkness, had just been married to a princess of Sicily. It was a year since Madame de Staël had died. The Life-guards hissed Mlle. Mars. The large papers were all small; their size was limited, but their liberty was great. The “Constitutionnel” was constitutional, and the “Minerva” called Châteaubriand, Châteaubriant; this *t* made the city laugh heartily, at the expense of the great writer. Pros-

tituted journalists insulted the proscripts of 1815 in mercenary journals. David had no longer any talent, Arnault any wit, Carnot any probity. Soult never gained a battle. It was true that Napoleon was no longer a genius. Everybody knows that it is rare for letters sent by post to reach an exile, for the police make it a religious duty to intercept them. The fact is not new, for Descartes, when banished, complained of it. David having displayed some temper in a Belgian paper at not receiving letters written to him, this seemed very amusing to the royalist journals, which ridiculed the proscribed man. The use of the words regicides or voters, enemies or allies, Napoleon or Bonaparte, separated two men more widely than an abyss. All persons of common sense were agreed that the era of revolutions was eternally closed by Louis XVIII., surnamed "the Immortal Author of the Charter." On the platform of the Pont Neuf, the word "Redivivus" was carved on the pedestal which was awaiting the statue of Henri IV. At No. 4 Rue Therese, Piet was making the first plan for his Convention to consolidate the monarchy. The leaders of the Right said in grave complications, "We must write to Bacot." Messrs. Canuel, O'Mahony, and de Chappedelaine were sketching, under the covert approval of Monsieur, what was destined to be at a later date "the conspiracy of the Bord de l'eau." The "Black Pin" was plotting. Delaverderie was coming to an understanding with Trogoff. Decazes, a rather liberally minded man, was in the ascendant. Châteaubriand stood every morning at his window, No. 27 Rue St. Dominique, in trousers and slippers, a handkerchief over his gray hair, with his eyes fixed on a mirror, and a case of dentist's instruments open before him, cleaning his teeth, which were splendid, while he dictated "The Monarchy according to the Charter" to his secretary, Pilorge. Critics in authority preferred Lafon to Talma. De Feletz signed A; Hoffman signed Z. Charles Nodier was writing "Therese Aubert." Divorce was abolished. Lyceums were called colleges. Collegians, with a gold fleur-de-lis on their collar, fought about the king of

Rome. The counter-police of the castle denounced to her Royal Highness Madame, the portrait, everywhere exhibited, of the Duke d'Orléans, who looked much handsomer in his uniform of colonel-general of hussars than the Duke de Berry did in his uniform as colonel-general of dragoons, which was a serious annoyance. The city of Paris had the dome of the Invalides regilded at its own expense. Serious-minded men asked themselves what De Trinquelague would do in such and such a case. Clausel de Montals differed on certain points from Clausel de Coussergues; De Salaberry was not satisfied. Picard, the comedian, who belonged to the Academy of which Molière was not a member, was playing "The Two Philiberts" at the Odeon, on whose façade could still be distinctly read: THÉÂTRE DE L'IMPERATRICE, although the letters had been torn down. People were taking sides for or against Cugnet de Montarlot. Fabvier was factious; Bavoux was revolutionary; Pelicier, the publisher, brought out an edition of Voltaire with the title, "The Works of Voltaire, Member of the Academy." "That will catch purchasers," said the simple publisher. It was the general opinion that Charles Loyson would be the genius of the age. Envy was beginning to snap at him,—a sure sign of glory; and the following line was written about him:

"Even when Loyson steals, we feel that he has paws."

As Cardinal Fesch refused to resign, M. de Pins, archbishop of Amasia, administered the diocese of Lyons. The quarrel about the Dappes valley began between Switzerland and France through a memorial of Captain Dufour, who has since become a general. Saint Simon, utterly ignored, was building up his sublime dream. There were in the Academy of Sciences a celebrated Fourier whom posterity has forgotten, and in some obscure garret a Fourier whom the future will remember. Lord Byron was beginning to startle the world; a note to a poem by Millevoye announced him to France in these terms, "un certain Lord Baron." David d'Angers was trying to work in marble. The Abbé Caron

spoke in terms of praise to a select audience in the Alley of the Feuillantines of an unknown priest called Felicité Robert, who at a later date became Lamennais. A thing that smoked and splashed on the Seine with the noise of a swimming dog, went and came under the Tuileries windows from the Pont Royal to the Pont Louis XV.: it was a mechanism not worth much, a sort of plaything, the idle dream of a mad inventor, a utopia,—a steamboat. The Parisians looked at this useless thing with indifference. M. de Vaublanc, reformer of the Institute by a revolutionary measure, and distinguished author of several academicians, after making them, could not succeed in becoming one himself. The Faubourg St. Germain and the Pavillon Marson desired to have Delavau for prefect of police on account of his piety. Dupuytren and Récamier quarreled in the amphitheatre of the school of medicine, and threatened each other with their fists, about the divinity of the Saviour. Cuvier, with one eye on Genesis and the other on Nature, was striving to please bigoted reaction by reconciling fossils with texts, and making mastodons flatter Moses. François de Neufchâteau, the praiseworthy cultivator of the memory of Parmentier, was making a thousand efforts to have “pommes de terre”¹ pronounced “parmentière,” but did not succeed. The Abbé Gregoire, ex-bishop, ex-Conventionalist, and ex-senator, gained in royalist polemics the title of the “infamous Gregoire.” The expression “gained the title” was denounced by Royer Collard as a neologism. Under the third arch of the Pont de Jena, the new stone which was used two years before to stop the hole made by Blucher to blow up the bridge could still be recognized by its whiteness. Justice summoned to her bar a man who, on seeing Count d’Artois enter Notre Dame, said aloud, “Sapristi! I regret the days when I saw Napoleon and Talma enter the Bal-Sauvage arm in arm,”—seditious remarks, punished with six months’ imprisonment.

Traitors displayed themselves unblushingly. Some who had gone over to the enemy on the eve of a battle, did not

¹ Potatoes, introduced by Parmentier.

conceal their reward, but walked immodestly in the sunshine with the cynicism of wealth and dignities; deserters from Ligny and Quatre Bras, well rewarded for their turpitude, openly displayed their monarchical devotion.

Such are a few recollections of the year 1817, now forgotten. History neglects nearly all these details, and cannot do otherwise; as the infinity would overwhelm it. Still these details, wrongly called trivial,—there are no trivial facts in humanity, or little leaves in vegetation,—are useful, for the face of the ages is composed of the physiognomy of years.

In this year 1817 four young Parisians played a capital joke.

CHAPTER II

A DOUBLE QUARTET

THESE Parisians came, one from Toulouse, the second from Limoges, the third from Cahors, the fourth from Montauban, but they were students, and thus Parisians; for to study in Paris is to be born in Paris. These young men were insignificant; we have all seen just such fellows,—four every-day specimens, neither good nor bad, neither wise nor ignorant, neither geniuses nor idiots; handsome, with that charming April which is called twenty years. They were four Oscars, for at that period Arthurs did not yet exist. “Burn for him the perfumes of Araby,” said the romance. “Oscar advances: Oscar, I shall behold him!” People had just emerged from Ossian; the elegant world was Scandinavian and Caledonian; the pure English style was not destined to prevail till a later date, and the first of the Arthurs, Wellington, had only just won the battle of Waterloo.

The names of these Oscars were Felix Tholomyès, of Toulouse; Listolier, of Cahors; Fameuil, of Limoges, and Blacheville, of Montauban. Of course each had a mistress,—

Blachevelle loved Favourite, so called because she had been to England; Listolier adored Dahlia, who had taken the name of a flower for her nick-name; Fameuil idolized Zephine, short for Josephine; while Tholomyès had Fantine, called the Blonde, from her magnificent sunny hair. Favourite, Dahlia, Zephine, and Fantine were four exquisitely pretty girls, radiant and sweet, though somewhat plebeian. They had not entirely laid down their needles; and, though disturbed by their love affairs, their faces still bore traces of the serenity of toil, and their souls, of that flower of honesty which in a woman survives the first fall. One of the four was called "the young one," because she was the youngest, and one called "the old one," although only three-and-twenty. To conceal nothing, the first three were more experienced, more reckless, and had flown farther into the tumult of life than Fantine the Fair, who still retained her first illusions.

Dahlia, Zephine, and especially Favourite, could not have said the same. There was already more than one episode in their scarce-begun romance, and the lover who was called Adolphe in the first chapter became Alphonse in the second, and Gustave in the third. Poverty and coquetry are two fatal counsellors,—one scolds, the other flatters; and the beautiful daughters of the people have them whispering in both ears. These badly guarded souls listen, and hence come their falls, and the stones hurled at them. They are crushed by the splendour of all that is immaculate and inaccessible. Alas! if the Jungfrau were starving? Favourite, having been to England, was admired by Zephine and Dahlia. She had a home of her own from an early age. Her father was a brutal, boasting, old professor of mathematics, unmarried, and still giving lessons in spite of his age. This professor, when a young man, had one day seen a chambermaid's gown catch on a fender; he fell in love with this accident, and Favourite was the result. She met her father from time to time, and he bowed to her. One morning, an old woman with a hypocritical look came into her room, and said, "Do you not know me, miss?" "No." "I am your mother." Then

the old woman opened the cupboard, ate and drank, sent for a mattress she had, and installed herself. This mother, who was cross and pious, never spoke to Favourite, sat for hours without saying a word, breakfasted, dined, and supped for half a dozen, and spent her evenings in the porter's lodge, where she abused her daughter.

What drew Dahlia toward Listolier, toward others perhaps, toward idleness, was having such pretty pink nails. How could she make such nails work? A girl who would remain virtuous must have no pity on her hands.

As for Zephine, she conquered Fameuil by her little saucy, coaxing way of saying "Yes, sir." The young men were comrades, the girls friends. Such intrigues are always accompanied by such friendships.

Goodness and philosophy are two distinct things; and this is proved by the fact that, after making all due allowance for these little irregular households, Favourite, Zephine, and Dahlia were philosophic girls, and Fantine a good girl. Good, it will be said, and how about Tholomyès? Solomon would reply that love is part of wisdom. We confine ourselves to saying that Fantine's love was a first love, a single love, a faithful love. She was the only one of the four who was addressed familiarly by one man alone.

Fantine was one of those beings who spring up from the dregs of the people; issuing from the lowest depths of social darkness, she bore on her brow the stamp of the anonymous and the unknown. She was born at M. sur M.; of what parents? Who could say? She had never known either father or mother. She was called Fantine, and why Fantine? She was never known by any other name. At the time of her birth, the Directory was still in existence. She had no family name, as she had no family; and no Christian name, as the Church was abolished. She accepted the name given her by the first passer-by, who saw her running barefooted about the streets. She received a name as she received the rain from heaven when it fell upon her head. She was called little Fantine, and no one knew any more. This

human creature came into the world in that way. At the age of ten Fantine left the town, and went into service with farmers in the neighbourhood. At the age of fifteen she went to Paris, "to seek her fortune." Fantine was pretty, and remained pure as long as she could. She was a charming blonde, with handsome teeth. She had gold and pearls for her dower; but the gold was on her head, and the pearls in her mouth.

She worked for a livelihood; and then she loved, still for the sake of living, for the heart is hungry too. She loved Tholomyès. It was a pastime for him, but a passion with her. The streets of the Latin Quarter, which are thronged with students and grisettes, saw the beginning of this dream. Fantine, in the labyrinth of the Pantheon Hill where so many adventures begin and end, long shunned Tholomyès, but in such a way as to meet him constantly. There is a way of avoiding which resembles seeking,—in a word, the eclogue took place.

Blacheville, Listolier, and Fameuil formed a sort of group, of which Tholomyès was the head; for it was he who had the wit. Tholomyès was the student of antiquity. He was rich, for he had an income of four thousand francs, a splendid scandal on the Montagne St. Geneviève. Tholomyès was a man of the world, thirty years of age, and in a bad state of preservation. He was wrinkled, and had lost teeth; and he had an incipient baldness, of which he himself said without sorrow: "A skull at thirty, a billiard-ball at forty." He had but a poor digestion, and one of his eyes was permanently watery. But as his youth faded, his gayety became brighter; he substituted jests for his teeth, joy for his hair, irony for his health, and his weeping eye laughed incessantly. He was battered, but still blooming. His youth, which made ready to depart long before its time, had beaten an orderly retreat, bursting with laughter, and only the fire was visible. He had had a piece refused at the Vaudeville theatre, and wrote occasional verses now and then. In addition, he doubted everything in a superior way, which is a great power in the

eyes of the weak. Hence, being ironical and bald, he was the leader. "Iron" is an English word. We wonder whether, "irony" is derived from it.

One day Tholomyès took the other three aside, made an oracular gesture, and said, "Fantine, Dahlia, Zephine, and Favourite have been asking us for nearly a year to give them a surprise, and we solemnly promised to do so. They are always talking about it, especially to me. Just as the old women of Naples cry to Saint Januarius, 'Yellow face, perform thy miracle!' our beauties incessantly say, 'Tholomyès, when will you bring forth your surprise?' At the same time our parents are writing to us,—a double nuisance. The moment appears to me to have arrived, so let us talk it over."

Upon this, Tholomyès lowered his voice, and mysteriously uttered something so amusing that a mighty and enthusiastic laugh burst from four mouths simultaneously, and Blachevelle exclaimed, "That is an idea!" A tap-room full of smoke presenting itself, they went in, and the remainder of their conference was lost in tobacco-clouds. The result of the gloom was a brilliant pleasure party which took place on the following Sunday, to which the four young men invited the girls.

CHAPTER III

FOUR AND FOUR

IT is difficult to form an idea at the present day of what a pleasure party of students and grisettes was like four-and-forty years ago. Paris has no longer the same suburbs. The face of what may be termed circum-Parisian life has completely changed during half a century. Where there was the cuckoo¹ there is now a railway carriage; where there was the cutter, there is now the steamer; people talk of

¹ Old-fashioned cab.

Fécamp now as people did in those days of St. Cloud. Paris of 1862 is a city which has France for its suburbs.

The four couples conscientiously accomplished all the rustic follies possible at that time. It was a bright, warm, summer day; they rose at five o'clock; then they went to St. Cloud in the stage-coach, looked at the dry cascade, and exclaimed, "That must be grand when there is water!" breakfasted at the Tête Noire, where Castaing had not yet put up; played at ring-toss under the Quincunx of trees near the great fountain; ascended the Diogenes lantern; gambled for macaroons at the roulette-board by the Sèvres bridge; culled posies at Puteaux; bought reed-pipes at Neuilly; ate apple-tarts everywhere, and were perfectly happy. The girls prattled and chattered like escaped linnets; they were quite wild, and every now and then gave the young men little taps. Oh, youthful intoxication of life! Adorable years! The wings of the dragon-fly flutter. Oh, whoever you may be, do you remember? Have you ever walked in the woods, removing the branches for the sake of the pretty head that comes behind you? Have you slid laughing down a damp slope, with a beloved woman who holds your hand, and cries, "Oh, my new boots, what a state they are in!" Let us say at once that the merry annoyance of a shower was spared the happy party, although Favourite had said on starting, with a magisterial and maternal air, "The slugs are walking about the paths; that is a sign of rain, children."

All four were distractingly pretty. A good old classic poet, then renowned, the Chevalier de Labouïsse,—a worthy man who had an Eléanore,—wandering that day under the chestnut-trees of St. Cloud, saw them pass at about ten in the morning, and exclaimed, "There is one too many;" he was thinking of the Graces. Favourite, the girl who was three-and-twenty, the old one, ran on in front under the big green branches, leaped over ditches, strode madly across bushes, and presided over the gayety with the spirit of a young fawn. Zephine and Dahlia, whose beauty chanced to be such that each enhanced and completed the other, did not separate,

though more through a coquettish instinct than through friendship, and, leaning upon each other, they assumed English attitudes. The first Keepsakes had just come out; melancholy was the fashion for women, as Byronism was at a later date for men, and the hair of the tender sex began to droop loosely. Zephine and Dahlia wore their hair in rolls. Listolier and Fameuil, who were engaged in a discussion about their professors, were explaining to Fantine the difference between M. Delvincourt and M. Blondeau. Blachevelle seemed to have been created expressly to carry Favourite's shabby imitation India shawl on Sundays.

Tholomyès came last, dominating the group. He was very gay, but he seemed born to rule; there was something dictatorial in his joviality. His principal adornment was a pair of nankeen trousers, cut in the shape of elephants' legs, with leathern straps. He had a mighty rattan worth two hundred francs in his hand, and, as he was quite reckless, a strange thing called a cigar in his mouth. Nothing being sacred to him, he smoked. "That Tholomyès is astounding," the others were wont to say with veneration. "What trousers! what energy!"

As for Fantine, she was the personification of joy. Her splendid teeth were plainly made for laughter. She carried in her hand, more frequently than on her head, her little straw bonnet, with its long white strings. Her thick light hair, inclined to wave, constantly falling down and having to be done up continually, seemed made for the flight of Galatea under the willows. Her rosy lips prattled enchantingly. The corners of her mouth, voluptuously raised, as in the antique masks of Erigone, seemed to encourage boldness; but her long, shadowy lashes were discreetly drooped upon the seductiveness of the lower part of the face, as if to command respect. Her entire dress had something harmonious and attractive about it. She wore a dress of mauve barége, little buskin slippers, with strings crossed over her fine, open-worked stockings, and that sort of muslin spencer, a Mar-seilles invention, whose name, "canezou,"—a corruption of

quinze Août, as pronounced at the Cannebière,— signifies fine weather and noonday heat. The other three, who were less timid, as we said, wore low-necked dresses, which in summer are very graceful and attractive, with bonnets covered with flowers; but by the side of this bold attire Fantine's canezou, with its transparency, indiscretion, and reticence, at once concealing and displaying, seemed a provocative invention of decency. The famous court of Love, presided over by the Viscountess of Cette with the sea-green eyes, would probably have bestowed the prize for coquettishness on this canezou, which competed for that of chastity. The simplest things are frequently the cleverest.

Dazzling from a front view, delicate from a side view, with dark-blue eyes, heavy lids, small arched feet, wrists and ankles admirably formed, the white skin displaying here and there the azure veins, with the fresh childish cheek, and robust neck of the Juno of Egina, shoulders apparently modelled by Coustou, a voluptuous dimple in their centre, visible through the muslin; a gayety tempered by reverie; a sculptural and exquisite being,—such was Fantine. You could trace beneath the ribbons and finery a statue, and within the statue a soul. Fantine was beautiful without being too conscious of it. Those rare dreamers, the mysterious priests of the beautiful, who silently confront everything with perfection, would have seen in this little working-girl the ancient sacred euphony, through the transparency of Parisian grace! This daughter of the shadow was thoroughbred. She was beautiful in two ways,—style and rhythm. Style is the form of the ideal; rhythm is its movement.

We have said that Fantine was joy itself; she was also modesty personified. Any one who watched her closely would have seen through all this intoxication of youth, the season, and love, an invincible expression of restraint and modesty. She always looked slightly astonished, and this chaste astonishment is the distinguishing shade between Psyche and Venus. Fantine had the long white delicate fingers of the Vestal who stirs the sacred fire with a golden bodkin. Though

she would have refused nothing to Tholomyès, as we shall soon see, her face when in repose was supremely virginal. A stern and almost austere dignity suddenly invaded it at certain times; and nothing was so singular and affecting as to see gayety so rapidly extinguished, and contemplation succeed cheerfulness without any transition. This sudden gravity, which was at times strongly marked, resembled the disdain of a goddess. Her forehead, nose, and chin had that equilibrium of outline which is distinct from the equilibrium of proportion, and produces harmony of the face; in the characteristic space between the base of the nose and the upper lip, she had that imperceptible and charming curve, that mysterious sign of chastity, which made Barbarossa fall in love with a Diana found in the ruins of Iconium. Love is a fault; be it so; but Fantine was innocence floating on the surface of the fault.

CHAPTER IV

THOLOMYÈS IS SO MERRY AS TO SING A SPANISH SONG

THAT day seemed composed of dawn; all nature seemed to be having a holiday, and to be laughing. The flower-beds of St. Cloud exhaled perfume; the breeze from the Seine faintly stirred the leaves; the branches beckoned in the wind; the bees plundered the jessamine; a madcap swarm of butterflies settled on the ragwort, the clover, and the wild oats; in the august park of the king of France there was a pack of vagabonds, the birds. The four happy couples enjoyed the sun, the fields, the flowers, and the trees. And in this community of paradise, three of the girls, while singing, talking, dancing, chasing butterflies, picking bindweed, wetting their stockings in the tall grass, fresh, madcap, but not dissolute, received kisses from all in turn. Fantine alone

was shut off by her dreamy, shy resistance, and she alone loved. "You always look strange," Favourite said to her.

Such are joys. Such passages of happy couples are a profound appeal to life and nature, and bring caresses and light out of everything. Once upon a time there was a fairy, who made fields and trees expressly for lovers; hence the eternal hedge school of lovers, which is forever beginning afresh, and will last so long as there are hedges and scholars. Hence the popularity of spring among thinkers; the patrician and the pedler, the duke and the pettifogger, people of the court and people of the town, as they were formerly called, are all subjects of this fairy. People laugh and chase each other. There is the brilliancy of an apotheosis in the air, for what a transfiguration is love! Notary's clerks are gods. And then the little shrieks, pursuits through the grass, waists caught by surprise, that chattering which is so melodious, that adoration which breaks out in the pronunciation of a word, cherries torn from lips by neighbouring lips, pretty girls sweetly squandering their charms,—all this is glorious! People believe that it will never end; philosophers, poets, artists, behold these ecstasies, and know not what to do, they are so dazzled by them. "The departure for Cythera!" exclaims Watteau; Lancret, the painter of the middle classes, sees his trades-people flying away in the blue sky; Diderot stretches out his arms to all these love affairs and d'Urfé mixes up Druids with them.

After breakfast the four couples went to what was then called the King's Square, to see a plant newly arrived from the Indies, whose name we have forgotten, but which at that time attracted all Paris to St. Cloud; it was a strange, pretty shrub, with a tall stem, whose numerous branches, fine as threads, and leafless, were covered with a million of small white rosettes, which made it look like a head of hair swarming with flowers; there was always a crowd around it, admiring it. After inspecting the shrub, Tholomyès exclaimed, "I will pay for donkeys!" and, after making a bargain with the donkey-man, they returned by Vanvres and Issy. At the

latter place an incident occurred; the park, a national estate held at this time by Bourguin, the contractor, was accidentally open. They passed through the gates, visited the lay figure hermit in his grotto, and tried the mysterious effect of the famous cabinet of mirrors,—a wanton trap, worthy of a satyr who had become a millionaire, or of Turcaret metamorphosed into Priapus. They bravely pulled the large swing fastened to the two chestnut-trees celebrated by the Abbé de Bernis. While swinging the ladies in turn, producing, amid general laughter, a flying of skirts worthy of Greuze, the Toulousan Tholomyès, who was somewhat of a Spaniard, as Toulouse is the cousin of Tolosa, sang to a melancholy tune the old *gallega*, which was probably inspired by the sight of a pretty girl swinging between two trees:—

“Soy de Badajoz
Amor me llama
Toda mi alma
Es en mis ojos
Porque enseñas
A tuas pierñas.”

Fantine alone declined to swing.

“I do not like people to be so affected,” Favourite muttered rather sharply.

On giving up the donkeys, there was fresh pleasure; the Seine was crossed in a boat, and from Passy they walked to the Barrière de l’Etoile. They had been afoot since five in the morning; but no matter! “There is no such thing as weariness on Sunday,” said Favourite; “on Sundays fatigue does not work.” At about three o’clock the four couples, wild with delight, turned into the Montagnes Russes,¹ a singular structure, which at that time occupied the heights of Beaujon, and whose waving line could be seen over the trees of the Champs Elysées. From time to time Favourite exclaimed:—

“Where is the surprise? I insist on the surprise.”

“Have patience,” answered Tholomyès.

¹ An artificial coast, popular with the people abroad.

CHAPTER V

AT BOMBARDA'S

THE Russian mountains exhausted, they thought about dinner; and the radiant eight, at length somewhat weary, ran aground at Bombarda's coffee-house, an off-shoot established in the Champs Elysées by the famous Bombarda, whose sign could be seen at that time in the Rue de Rivoli near the Passage Delorme.

A large but ugly room, with an alcove and a bed at the end (owing to the crowded state of the houses on Sundays, they were compelled to put up with it); two windows from which the quay and river could be viewed through the elm-trees; a magnificent autumn sun illumining the windows; two tables,—on one of them a triumphal mountain of bouquets, mixed up with hats and bonnets, at the other, four couples seated round a joyous mass of dishes, plates, bottles, and glasses, pitchers of beer, mingled with wine bottles; very little order on the table, and some amount of disorder under it.

“They made beneath the table

A noise, a clatter of feet that was abominable.”

as Molière says. Such was the state at half-past four in the afternoon of the pastoral which began at five in the morning; the sun was setting, and appetite was satisfied.

The Champs Elysées, full of sunshine and people, were all light and dust,—two things of which glory is composed. The horses of Marly, those neighing marbles, reared amid a golden cloud. Carriages came and went; a squadron of splendid body-guards, with the trumpeter at their head, rode down the Neuilly avenue; the white flag, tinged with pink by the setting sun, floated above the dome of the Tuileries. The Place de la Concorde, which had again become the Place Louis XV., was crowded with merry promenaders. Many

wore the silver fleur-de-lis hanging from a white, watered ribbon, which, in 1817, had not entirely disappeared from button-holes. Here and there, in the midst of applauding crowds, little girls were singing a Bourbon jig, very celebrated at that time, intended to crush the Hundred Days, and which had a chorus of,—

“Send back our father from Ghent,
Send back our father.”

Groups of suburbans, dressed in their Sunday clothes, some wearing fleur-de-lis like the townspeople, were scattered over the Squares, playing at ring-toss, or riding in merry-go-rounds; others were drinking; some printers' apprentices wore paper caps, and their laughter was loud. All was radiant; it was a time of undeniable peace, and of profound royalist security; it was a period when a private and special report of Chief of Police Anglès to the king, closed with these lines: “All things duly considered, sire, there is nothing to fear from these people. They are as careless and indolent as cats, and though the lower classes in the provinces are stirring, those in Paris are not. They are all little men, sire, and it would take two of them to make one of our grenadiers. There is nothing to fear from the populace of the capital. It is remarkable that their height has decreased during the last fifty years, and the people of the suburbs of Paris are shorter than they were before the Revolution. They are not dangerous, and, in a word, are good-tempered rabble.”

Chiefs of police do not believe it possible for a cat to be changed into a lion; it is so, however, and that is the miracle of the people of Paris. The cat, so despised by Count Anglès, possessed the esteem of the Republics of old,—it was the incarnation of liberty in their eyes; and as if to serve as a pendant to the Minerva Apteros of the Piræus, there was in the public square of Corinth a colossal bronze statue of a cat. The simple police of the Restoration had too favourable an opinion of the people of Paris; they are not such good-tempered rabble as they are supposed to be. The Pari-

sian is to the Frenchman what the Athenian is to the Greek: no one sleeps sounder than he; no one is more frankly frivolous and idle than he; no one can pretend to forget so well as he,—but he must not be trusted. He is apt at every kind of carelessness; but when there is glory at the end of it, he is wonderful for every sort of fury. Give him a pike, and he will make August 10; give him a musket, and you will have Austerlitz. He is the support of Napoleon, and the resource of Danton. If the country is in danger, he enlists; if liberty is imperilled, he tears up the pavement. His hair, full of wrath, is epic; his blouse assumes the folds of a chlamys. Take care; for of the first Rue Grenetat he comes to, he will make Caudine forks. If the hour strikes, this suburban grows in stature; the little man arises, and his eye is terrible, his breath becomes a tempest, and from his weak chest issues a blast strong enough to uproot the Alps. It was through this class of Parisian that the Revolution, joined with armies, conquered Europe. He sings, and that is his delight; proportion his song to his nature, and you shall see! So long as he has no burden but the “Carmagnole,” he will merely overthrow Louis XVI.; but let him sing the “Marseillaise,” and he will deliver the world.

After writing this note on the margin of Count Anglès's report, we will return to our four couples. The dinner, as we said, was drawing to a close.

CHAPTER VI

MUTUAL ADORATION

LOVE talk and table talk are equally indescribable; for the first is a cloud, the second smoke. Fantine and Dahlia were humming a tune, Tholomyès was drinking, Zephine laughing, Fantine smiling, Listolier was blowing a

penny trumpet bought at St. Cloud, Favourite was looking tenderly at Blachevelle and saying:—

“Blachevelle, I adore you.”

This led Blachevelle to ask:—

“What would you do, Favourite, if I ceased to love you?”

“I?” exclaimed Favourite. “Oh, do not say that, even in fun! If you ceased to love me, I would run after you, claw you, scratch you, throw water over you, and have you arrested.”

Blachevelle smiled with the voluptuous fatuity of a man whose self-esteem is tickled.

Favourite went on: “Yes, I would call the police! Oh, I should be horribly put out, you scamp!”

Dahlia, still eating, whispered to Favourite through the noise:—

“You seem to be very fond of your Blachevelle?”

“I detest him,” Favourite answered in the same key, as she seized her fork again. “He is miserly, and I prefer the little fellow who lives opposite to me. He is very nice, that young man; do you know him? It is easy to see that he wants to be an actor, and I am fond of actors. So soon as he comes in, his mother says, ‘Oh, good heavens, my peace is gone; there he goes with his noise; my dear boy, you give me a headache;’ because he goes about the house, into the garrets as high as he can get, and sings and shouts so that he can be heard in the streets. He already earns twenty sous a day in a lawyer’s office by scribbling nonsense. He is the son of a former precentor at St. Jacques du Haut Pas. Ah! he adores me to such a pitch that one day when he saw me making batter for pancakes, he said to me, ‘Mamselle, make fritters of your gloves, and I will eat them.’ Only artists can say things like that. Ah! he is very nice, and I feel as if I should fall madly in love with the little fellow. No matter, I tell Blachevelle that I adore him; what a falsehood, eh, what a falsehood!”

After a pause, Favourite continued:—

“You see, Dahlia, I am sad. It has done nothing but

rain all summer; the wind irritates me; Blachevelle is excessively mean; there are hardly any green peas in the market,—one does not know what to eat; I have the spleen, as the English say, for butter is so dear, and then, you see, it is horrid that we should have to dine in a room with a bed in it, and that disgusts me with life.”

CHAPTER VII

THE WISDOM OF THOLOMYÈS

AT length, when all were singing noisily, or talking all together, Tholomyès interfered.

“Let us not talk haphazard or too quickly,” he exclaimed. “We must meditate if we desire to be striking; too much improvisation stupidly empties the mind. Gentlemen, no haste; let us mingle majesty with our feast, eat contemplatively, and let *festina lentè* be our rule. We must not hurry. Look at the Spring; if it goes ahead too fast, it is floored,—that is to say, nipped by frost. Excessive zeal ruins the peach and apricot trees. Excessive zeal kills the grace and joy of good dinners. No zeal, gentlemen; Grimod de la Reynière is of the same opinion as Talleyrand.”

The party rebelled.

“Tholomyès, leave us in peace,” said Blachevelle.

“Down with the tyrant,” said Fameuil.

“Sunday exists,” Listolier added.

“We are sober,” Fameuil remarked again.

“Tholomyès,” said Blachevelle, “see my calmness (*mon calme*).”

“You are the marquis of that,” replied Tholomyès. This poor pun produced the effect of a stone thrown into a pond. The Marquis de Montcalm was a celebrated royalist of the day. All the frogs were silent.

"My friends," shouted Tholomyès, with the accent of a man who recaptures his empire, "come to your senses! Too great stupor should not greet this pun dropped from the clouds; for everything that falls thence is not necessarily worthy of enthusiasm and respect. Far be it from me to insult puns; I honour them according to their deserts, and no more. All the most august, sublime, and charming members of humanity have made puns; as, for instance, Christ made a pun on Saint Peter, Moses on Isaac, Æschylus on Polynices, and Cleopatra on Octavius. And note the fact that Cleopatra's pun preceded the battle of Actium, and that, were it not for that pun, no one would remember the town of Toryne,—a Greek word signifying a pot-ladle. This granted, I return to my exhortation. Brethren, I repeat, no zeal, no row, no excess, not even in puns, jokes, and plays upon words. Listen to me, for I possess the prudence of Amphiaras and the baldness of Cæsar; there must be a limit even to rebuses, for *est modus in rebus*. There must be a limit even to dinners. You are fond of apple-puffs, ladies, but no abuse; even in the matter of apple-puffs, good sense and art are needed. Gluttony chastises the glutton; *gula punit gulax*. Indigestion was sent into the world to read a lecture to our stomachs; and, bear this in mind, each of our passions, even love, has a stomach which must not be filled too full. In all things, we must write the word *finis* betimes; we must restrain ourselves when it becomes urgent, put a bolt on our appetites, lock up our fancy, and place ourselves under arrest. The wise man is he who knows how, at a given moment, to arrest himself. Place some confidence in me. It does not follow because I know a little law, as my examinations prove; because I know the difference between the question put and the question pending; because I have sustained a thesis in Latin as to the mode in which torture was applied at Rome at the time when Munatius Demens was *quæstor par-ricidæ*; and because I am going to be a Doctor at Law, as it seems; it does not necessarily follow, I say, that I am an ass. I recommend to you moderation in your desires. As truly

as my name is Felix Tholomyès, I speak the truth. Happy the man who, when the hour has struck, forms a heroic resolve, and abdicates like Sylla or Origen."

Favourite listened with profound attention. "Felix!" she said. "What a pretty name; I like it. It is Latin, and means prosperous."

Tholomyès continued: "Quirites, gentlemen, Caballeros, my friends. Would you feel no sting of passion, dispense with the nuptial couch, and defy love? Nothing easier. Lemonade, excess of exercise, hard work, tire yourselves, drag logs, do not sleep, keep awake, gorge yourselves with carbonated drinks and herb-teas, take emulsions of poppy and agnus-castus, season this with a severe diet, starve yourselves, take cold baths, wear girdles of herbs, a leaden plate, use lotions of sub-acetate of lead and washes of oxycrate."

"I prefer a woman," said Listolier.

"Women!" cried Tholomyès. "Be suspicious of women. Woe to the man who surrenders himself to a woman's fickle heart; woman is perfidious and wily, and detests the serpent from professional jealousy. The serpent is the shop over the way."

"Tholomyès," shouted Blachevelle, "you are drunk."

"I hope so!"

"Then be jolly."

"I am agreeable," answered Tholomyès. And filling his glass he rose.

"Glory to wine! *Nunc te, Bacche, canam!* Pardon, ladies, that is Spanish, and the proof, señoras, is this: like country like cask. The arroba of Castile contains sixteen quarts, the cantaro of Alicante twelve, the almuda of the Canary Isles twenty-five, the cuartino of the Balearic Isles twenty-six, and Czar Peter's boot thirty. Long live the czar who was great, and his boot which was greater still! Ladies, take a friend's advice; make a mistake in your neighbour, if you think proper. It is the quality of love to wander; it is not made to crouch and stoop like an English servant-girl who has stiff knees from scrubbing. Love is not made for that,

but to rove gayly. It is said that error is human, but I say error is amorous. Ladies, I idolize you all. O Zephine, O Josephine, you with your pretty face, you would be charming were you not all askew; your more than irregular face looks for all the world as if it had been sat upon by mistake. As for Favourite, O ye Nymphs and Muses! one day when Blachevelle was crossing the gutter in the Rue Guérin-Boisseau, he saw a pretty girl with well-fitting white stockings, who displayed her ankles. The prologue was pleasing, and Blachevelle fell in love; the girl he loved was Favourite. O Favourite, you have Ionian lips; there was a Greek painter named Euphorion who was christened the painter of lips, and this Greek alone would be worthy to paint your mouth. Listen to me: before you, there was not a creature worthy of the name; you are made to receive the apple like Venus, or to eat it like Eve. Beauty begins with you. I just mentioned Eve; but you created beauty, and you deserve a patent for inventing the pretty woman. You alluded to my name just now; it affected me deeply, but we must be distrustful of names, for they may be deceptive. My name is Felix, and yet I am not happy. Let us not blindly accept the indications they give us; it would be a mistake to write to Liege for corks, or to Pau for gloves.¹ Miss Dahlia, in your place I would call myself Rose; for a flower should smell sweet, and a woman should be witty. I say nothing of Fantine, for she is a dreamer, pensive and sensitive; she is a phantom, with the form of a nymph and the modesty of a nun, who has strayed into the life of a grisette, but takes shelter in illusions, who sings, prays, and looks at the blue sky without exactly knowing what she sees or what she does, and who, with her eyes fixed on heaven, wanders about a garden in which there are more birds than ever existed. O Fantine, know this: I, Tholomyès, am an illusion — Why, the fair girl of chimeras is not even listening to me! All about her is freshness, suavity, youth, and sweet morning brightness. O

¹ An untranslatable pun based on *chêne-liège* (a cork-tree) and *peau* (skin).

Fantine, girl worthy to be called Margaret or Pearl, you are a woman of the fairest Orient. Ladies, here is a second piece of advice: do not marry, for marriage is like grafting; it may succeed or not. Avoid that risk. But nonsense! I waste my words! Girls are incurable about wedlock; and all that we sages may say will not prevent waistcoat makers and shoe-binders from dreaming of husbands loaded with diamonds. Well, beauties, be it so; but bear this in mind, you eat too much sugar. You have only one fault, O women, and that is nibbling sugar. O nibbling sex, your pretty little white teeth adore sugar. Now, listen to this: sugar is a salt, and salts are of a drying nature; and sugar is the most drying of all salts. It pumps out the fluidity of the blood through the veins; this produces, first, coagulation and then solidification of the blood. From this come tubercles in the lungs, and thence death. Thus diabetes borders on consumption. Hence do not nibble sugar, and you will live. I now turn to my male hearers: Gentlemen, make conquests. Rob one another of your well-beloved ones remorselessly; change partners, for in love there are no friends. Whenever there is a pretty woman, hostilities are opened: there is no quarter, but war to the knife! A pretty woman is a *casus belli* and a flagrant offence. All the invasions of history were produced by petticoats; for woman is the lawful prey of man. Romulus carried off the Sabine women, William the Saxon women, and Cæsar the Roman women. A man who is not loved, soars like a vulture over the mistresses of other men; and, for my part, I offer all these unfortunate widowers Bonaparte's sublime proclamation to the army of Italy: 'Soldiers, you want for everything; the enemy possesses it.'

Here Tholomyès broke off.

"Take a breather, my boy," said Blachevelle.

At the same time the other three men struck up to a doleful air one of those studio-songs composed of the first words that come to hand, rhymed or not, as devoid of sense as the waving of a twig or the sound of the wind, which spring from the smoke of pipes, and fly away with it:—

"The father turkeys gave
 Some money to a slave
 That Mr. Clermont-Tonnerre
 Might be made pope at St. John's fair.
 But Clermont could not be
 Made pope, because no priest was he;
 And then their slave whose fury burned,
 Their money all to them returned."

The song was not adapted to calm Tholomyès' inspiration; hence he emptied his glass, re-filled it, and began again:—

"Down with wisdom! forget all I have said. Be neither prudish nor prudent nor hypocrites. I drink the health of jollity; so let us be jolly. Let us complete our legal studies by folly and good food, for indigestion should mate with digests. Let Justinian be the male and merriment the female! Live, O Creation! the world is one large diamond. I am happy, and the birds are astounding. What a festival all around us; the nightingale is an Elleviou for nothing. Summer, I salute thee. O Luxembourg! O ye Georgics of the Rue Madame and the Allée de l'Observatoire! O ye dreaming recruits! O ye delicious nurses, who, while you take care of children, fancy what your own will be like! The pampas of America would please me if I had not the arcades of the Odeon. My soul flies away to the virgin forests and the savannas. All is glorious; the flies buzz in the light; the sun has sneezed forth the humming-bird. Kiss me, Fantine!"

He made a mistake and kissed Favourite.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEATH OF A HORSE

THE dinners are better at Edon's than at Bombarda's," exclaimed Zephine.

"I prefer Bombarda," declared Blachevelle; "there is more luxury; it is more Asiatic. Just look at the dining-room

down stairs, with its mirrors; look at the knives,—they are silver-handled here and bone at Edon's. Now, silver is more precious than bone."

"Except to those persons who have a silver chin," observed Tholomyès.

He was looking at the dome of the Invalides, which was visible from Bombarda's window. There was a pause.

"Tholomyès," exclaimed Fameuil, "Listolier and I have just had a discussion."

"Discussion is good," he replied; "a quarrel is better."

"We were discussing philosophy. Which do you prefer, Descartes or Spinoza?"

"Désaugiers," said Tholomyès. Having given this decision, he continued: "I consent to live; all is not finished in the world, since men can still talk nonsense. I return thanks to the immortal gods. Men lie, but they laugh: they affirm, but they doubt; and the unexpected issues from the syllogism. This is grand; there are still in the world human beings who can joyously open and shut the puzzle-box of paradox. This wine, ladies, which you drink so calmly is Madeira, you must know, grown at Cural das Freiras, which is three hundred and seventeen fathoms above the sea-level. Attention while you drink! three hundred and seventeen fathoms, and Bombarda, the magnificent landlord, lets you have these three hundred and seventeen fathoms for four francs fifty centimes."

Fameuil again interrupted.

"Tholomyès, your opinions are law. Who is your favourite author?"

"Ber —"

"—quin?"

"No; —choux."

Tholomyès drained his glass, and then continued:—

"Honour to Bombarda! he would be equal to Munophis of Elephantia if he could ladle me up an Almeh, and to Thygelion of Cheronea if he could procure me a Hetæra! for, ladies, there were Bombardas in Greece and Egypt, as Apuleius

teaches us. Alas! ever the same thing and nothing new; nothing is left unpublished in the creation of the Creator. 'Nothing new under the sun,' says Solomon: *amor omnibus idem*; and Carabine gets into the St. Cloud boat with Carabin, just as Aspasia embarked with Pericles aboard the Samos fleet. One last word: Do you know who Aspasia was, ladies? Although she lived at a time when women had no soul, she was a soul,—a soul of pink and purple hue, hotter than fire, and fresher than dawn. Aspasia was a woman in whom the two extremes of femininity met; she was a harlot goddess, a Socrates *plus* Manon Lescaut."

Tholomyès, when started, would hardly have been checked, had not a horse fallen in the street at this very moment. From the shock, cart and orator stopped short. It was a Beauce mare, old and lean, and worthy of the knacker, dragging a very heavy cart. On getting in front of Bombarda's, the beast, exhausted and worn out, refused to go any farther, and this incident produced a crowd. The carter, swearing and indignant, had scarce time to utter with suitable energy the sacramental word "Jade!" backed up by a pitiless lash, ere the poor beast fell, never to rise again. Tholomyès' gay hearers turned their heads at the noise, while he wound up his speech with the following sad strophe:—

"She was of the world,
Which fairest things exposes to fates the most forlorn!
A horse, she too hath lived as long as live the horses,—
The space of one brief morn."¹

"Poor horse!" sighed Fantine; and Dahlia shouted:

"Why, here is Fantine beginning to feel pity for horses; how can she be such a fool?"

At this moment, Favourite crossed her arms and threw back her head; she then looked boldly at Tholomyès, and said:—

"Well, how about the surprise?"

"That is true, the hour has arrived," Tholomyès an-

¹ A parody on Malherbe's famous poem, "To M. Perrier on the Death of His Daughter."

swered. "Gentlemen, it is time to surprise the ladies. Pray, wait for us a moment."

"It begins with a kiss," said Blachevelle.

"On the forehead," added Tholomyès.

Each solemnly kissed the forehead of his mistress; then they proceeded to the door in Indian file, with a finger on their lips. Favourite clapped her hands as they went out.

"It is amusing already," she said.

"Do not be long," murmured Fantine; "we are waiting for you."

CHAPTER IX

THE JOYOUS END OF JOY

THE girls, when left alone, leaned out of the windows, two by two, talking, looking out, and wondering. They watched the young men leave the tavern arm in arm; they turned, made laughing signs, and disappeared in that dusty Sunday mob which once a week invades the Champs Elysées.

"Do not be long," cried Fantine.

"What will they bring us?" said Zephine.

"I am sure it will be pretty," said Dahlia.

"For my part," added Favourite, "I hope it will be set in gold."

They were soon distracted by the movements on the quay, which they could see through the branches of the tall trees, and which greatly amused them. It was the hour for the mail-coaches and stages to start, and nearly all those bound for the South and West at that time passed through the Champs Elysées. Most of them went along the quay and out by the barrier de Passy. Every moment some heavy vehicle, painted yellow and black, heavily loaded, and rendered shapeless by trunks, tarpaulins, and valises, dashed through the crowd, grinding the pavement, changing the stones to flint

and steel, striking sparks like a forge, the dust representing the smoke. This confusion amused the girls. Favourite exclaimed, "What a noise! you would think a heap of chains was flying away."

One of these vehicles, but half seen through the branches, stopped for a moment, then started off again at a gallop. This surprised Fantine.

"That is strange," she said; "I fancied that the diligence never stopped."

Favourite shrugged her shoulders.

"This Fantine is really amazing, I must take a look at her out of curiosity. She is surprised at the simplest things. Suppose I am a traveller and say to the guard, 'I will walk on and you can pick me up at the quay as you pass.' The coach passes, sees me, stops, and takes me in. That is done every day; you are ignorant of life, my dear."

Some time elapsed; all at once Favourite started as if waking from sleep.

"Well," she said, "where is the surprise?"

"Oh, yes," Dahlia continued, "the famous surprise."

"They are a long time," said Fantine.

Just as Fantine ended this sigh, the waiter who had served the dinner came in; he held in his hand something that looked like a letter.

"What is that?" asked Favourite.

The waiter answered:—

"It is the paper which the gentlemen left for you, ladies."

"Why did you not bring it to us at once?"

"Because the gentlemen," the waiter went on, "ordered that it should not be delivered to you for an hour."

Favourite snatched the paper from the waiter's hand. It was really a letter.

"Stay," she said; there is no address, but this is written upon it, 'THIS IS THE SURPRISE.'" She quickly opened the letter and read (she could read):—

"WELL BELOVED.— Know that we have relatives. Perhaps you do not exactly know what the word means; it means fathers and mothers in

the civil, puerile, and honest code. Well, these relatives groan; these old people claim us as their own; these worthy men and women call us prodigal sons. They desire our return home, and offer to kill the fatted calf. We obey them, as we are virtuous; when you read this, five impetuous steeds will be conveying us back to our papas and mammas. We are making tracks, to quote the language of Bossuet; we are going, gone. We fly in the arms of Lafitte and on the wings of Caillard. The Toulouse coach drags us from the abyss, and that abyss is yourselves, pretty dears. We return to society, duty, and order, at a sharp trot, and at the rate of nine miles an hour. It is important for our country that we should become, like everybody else, prefects, fathers of a family, game-keepers, and councillors of state. Revere us, for we sacrifice ourselves. Dry your tears for us rapidly, and get a substitute speedily. If this letter rend your hearts, treat it in the same fashion. Good-by. For nearly two years we have made you happy, so do not owe us any grudge.

(Signed) Blachevelle.
Fameuil.
Listolier.
Felix Tholomyès.

"P. S. The dinner is paid for."

The four girls looked at one another, and Favourite was the first to break the silence.

"I don't care," she said, "it is a capital joke."

"It is very funny," remarked Zephine.

"It must have been Blachevelle's idea," continued Favourite; "it makes me in love with him. So soon as he leaves me I begin to grow fond of him; the old story."

"No," said Dahlia, "it is Tholomyès' idea. That's plain."

"In that case," retorted Favourite, "down with Blachevelle, and long live Tholomyès!"

"Long live Tholomyès!" cried Dahlia and Zephine. And they burst into a laugh, in which Fantine joined; an hour later, though, when she returned to her room, she burst into tears. He was, as we have said, her first love; she had yielded to Tholomyès as to a husband, and the poor girl had a child.

BOOK IV

TO CONFIDE IS SOMETIMES TO ABANDON

CHAPTER I

TWO MOTHERS MEET

THERE was, in the first quarter of this century, a sort of pot-house at Montfermeil, near Paris, which no longer exists. It was kept by a man and wife named Thénardier, and was situated in Boulanger Alley. Over the door a board was nailed to the wall, and on this board was painted something resembling a man carrying on his back another man; who wore large gilt epaulets with silver stars; red dabs represented blood, and the rest of the painting was smoke, probably representing a battle. At the bottom could be read the inscription, "THE SERGEANT OF WATERLOO."

Though nothing is more common than a cart or truck at a pot-house door, the vehicle, or rather fragment of a vehicle, which blocked the street in front of The Sergeant of Waterloo, one spring evening in 1818, would certainly have attracted the attention of any painter who had passed that way. It was the fore-part of one of those wains used in wooded countries for dragging planks and trunks of trees; it was composed of a massive iron axle-tree, into which a heavy pole was fitted and supported by two enormous wheels. The whole thing was clumsy, tremendous, and shapeless, and it might have passed for the carriage of a monstrous gun. The ruts had given the wheels, felloes, spokes, axle-tree. and

pole, a coating of mud,—a hideous yellow plaster much like that with which cathedrals are so often adorned. The wood-work was hidden by mud and the iron with rust. Under the axle-tree was festooned a heavy chain, suited for a convict Goliath. This chain made you think, not of the wood it was intended to secure, but of the mastodons and mammoths which it might have served to harness; it reminded one of the galleys, but of a cyclopean and superhuman galleys, and seemed to have been removed from some monster. Homer would have bound Polyphemus with it, and Shakespeare, Caliban.

Why was this thing at this place in the street? First to block the street; secondly, to finish the rusting process. There is in the old social order a multitude of institutions which may be found in this fashion in the open air, and which have no other reason for being where they are. The centre of the chain hung rather close to the ground, and on the curve, as on the rope of a swing, two little girls were seated on this evening, in an exquisite embrace, one about two years and a half, the other eighteen months old,—the younger in the arms of the elder. A handkerchief carefully knotted prevented them from falling, for a mother had seen that frightful chain, and said, "What a famous plaything for my children!" The two children, who were dressed prettily and with some taste, were radiant; they looked like two roses among old iron. Their eyes were a triumph, their healthy cheeks laughed; one had auburn hair, the other black; their innocent faces had a look of delighted surprise; a flowering shrub a little distance off sent to passers-by a perfume which seemed to come from them; and the eighteen months old one displayed her pretty little bare stomach with the chaste indecency of childhood. Above and around the two delicate heads, moulded in happiness and bathed in light, the gigantic pair of wheels, black with rust, almost terrible, and bristling with curves and savage angles, formed the porch of a cavern, as it were. A few yards off, squatting at the inn door, the mother, a woman of no very pleasing appearance, but touching at this moment, was swinging the children by

the help of a long rope, devouring them with her eyes, for fear of an accident, with that animal and heavenly expression peculiar to maternity. At each oscillation the hideous links uttered a harsh sound, like an angry cry. The little girls were in ecstasies. The setting sun mingled with their joy; and nothing could be more charming than this caprice of chance which had made of a Titanic chain a cherub's swing. While playing with the little ones the mother sang terribly out of tune, a romance very famous at that day:—

“‘It must be,’ said a warrior bold.”

Her song and contemplation of her daughters prevented her hearing and seeing what took place in the street. Some one, however, had approached her, as she began the first couplets of the romance, and suddenly she heard a voice close to her ear:—

“You have two pretty children, ma’am.”

“—to the tender and fair Imogen”

the mother answered, continuing her song, and then turned her head. A woman stood a few paces from her, who also had a child, which she carried in her arms. She also carried a heavy bag. This woman's child was one of the most divine creatures possible to behold. She was a girl between two and three years of age, and could have vied with the two other little ones in the coquettishness of her dress. She had on a fine linen cap, ribbons at her shoulders, and Valenciennes lace in her cap. Her raised petticoats displayed her firm, white, dimpled thigh; it was admirably pink and healthy, and her cheeks made one long to bite them. Nothing could be said of her eyes, except that they must be very large, and that she had magnificent lashes, for she was asleep. She slept with the absolute confidence peculiar to her age; a mother's arms are made of tenderness, and children sleep soundly in them. As for the mother, she looked sad and poor, and was dressed like a working-girl trying to turn country-woman again. She was young; was she pretty? Per-

haps so; but in this dress she did not appear so. Her hair, a light lock of which peeped out, seemed very thick, but was completely hidden beneath an ugly, tight, close fitting, nun's hood, fastened under her chin. Laughter displays fine teeth when a person happens to possess them, but she did not laugh. Her eyes looked as if they had not been dry for a long time; she had a very weary and rather sickly air, and she looked at the child sleeping in her arms in the manner peculiar to a mother who has suckled her babe. A large blue handkerchief, like those served out to hospital patients, folded like a shawl, clumsily hid her shape. Her hands were rough and covered with red spots, and her forefinger was hardened and torn by the needle; she wore a brown cloth cloak, a cotton gown, and heavy shoes. It was Fantine.

It was difficult to recognize her; but, after an attentive examination, it was evident that she still possessed her beauty. A melancholy wrinkle, which looked like the beginning of sarcasm, furrowed her right cheek. As for her dress, that airy dress of muslin and ribbons which seemed made of gaiety, folly, and music, full of bells and perfumed with lilacs, — it had vanished like the beautiful, dazzling hoar-frost which looks like diamonds in the sun; it melts, and leaves the branch quite black.

Ten months had elapsed since the “good joke.” What had taken place during these ten months? We can guess. After desertion, want. Fantine instantly lost sight of Favourite, Zephine, and Dahlia, for the tie once broken by the men was loosed between the women. They would have been greatly surprised, a fortnight after, had they been told that they were ever friends; for there was no longer any reason for it. Fantine remained alone when the father of her child had gone. Alas! such ruptures are irrevocable. She found herself absolutely isolated; she had lost the habit of working, and had gained a taste for pleasure. Led by her connection with Tholomyès to despise the little trade she knew, she had neglected her employers, and it was lost. She had no resource. Fantine could hardly read, and could not write;

she merely had been taught in childhood to sign her name. She had sent a letter to Tholomyès, then a second, then a third, through a public letter-writer, but Tholomyès did not answer one of them. One day Fantine heard the gossips say, as they looked at her daughter, "Do people ever take children like that seriously? People shrug their shoulders at them." Then she thought of Tholomyès, who shrugged his shoulders at her child, and did not take the innocent creature seriously, and her heart turned from the man. What was she to do now? She knew not where to turn. She had committed a fault, but the foundation of her nature, we must remember, was modesty and virtue. She felt vaguely that she was on the eve of falling into distress, and gliding into a worse condition. She needed courage, and she had it. The idea occurred to her to return to her native town, M. sur M. There, some one might know her, and give her work; but she must hide her fault. And she vaguely perceived the possible necessity of a separation more painful still than the first; her heart ached, but she made up her mind. Fantine, as we shall see, possessed the stern bravery of life. She had already valiantly given up finery; she dressed in calico, and put all her silk, ribbons, and laces upon her daughter,—the only vanity left her, and it was a holy one. She sold all she possessed, which brought her in two hundred francs; and when she had paid her little debts, she had only about eighty francs left. At the age of two-and-twenty, on a fine spring morning, she left Paris, carrying her child on her back. Any one who had seen them pass would have pitied them; the woman had nothing in the world but her child, and the child nothing but her mother in her world. Fantine had suckled her child; this had weakened her chest, and she coughed a little.

We shall have no further occasion to speak of Felix Tholomyès. We will merely say that twenty years later, in the reign of Louis Philippe, he was a stout country lawyer, rich and influential, a sensible elector, and a very strict juror, but always a man of pleasure.

About midday, after resting herself now and then by travelling from time to time, at the expense of three or four sous a league, in what were then called the "little vehicles of the suburbs of Paris," Fantine found herself at Montfermeil, in Boulanger Alley. As she passed The Sergeant of Waterloo, the two little girls in their monster swing dazzled her, and she stopped before that vision of joy. There are charms in life, and these two little girls were one for this mother. She looked at them with great emotion, for the presence of angels is an announcement of paradise. She believed she saw above this pot-house the mysterious **HERE** of Providence. These two little creatures were evidently happy! She looked, and admired them with such tenderness that when the mother took breath between two verses of her song, she could not refrain from saying to her what we have already recorded:—

"You have two pretty children, ma'am."

The most ferocious creatures are disarmed by a caress to their little ones. The mother raised her head, thanked her, and bade her sit down on the bench by the door. The two women began talking.

"My name is 'Thénardier,'" said the mother of the little ones; "we keep this inn."

Then, returning to her romance, she went on humming,—

"'It must be so; I am a knight,
And I am bound for Palestine.'"

This Madame Thénardier was a red-headed, bony, angular woman, the type of a soldier's wife in all its ugliness, and, strange to say, with a languishing air which she owed to reading romances. She was an affected, masculine creature; for old romances, by working on the imagination of landladies, produce that effect. She was still young,—scarce thirty. If this woman, now stooping, had been standing up, perhaps her height and colossal proportions, fitting for a show, would have at once startled the traveller, destroyed her confidence, and prevented what we have to record. **A**

person sitting instead of standing up,—destinies hang on this.

The traveller told her story with some modifications. She was a working-girl; her husband was dead, she could get no work in Paris, and was going to seek it elsewhere,—in her native town. She had left Paris that very morning on foot; as she felt tired from carrying her child, she had travelled by the stage-coach to Villemomble; from that place she walked to Montfermeil. The little one had walked part of the way, but not far, for she was so young; and she had been obliged to take her up, and the darling had gone to sleep. And as she said this, she gave her daughter a passionate kiss, which waked her. The baby opened her eyes (large blue eyes like her mother's), and gazed at — what? Nothing, everything, with that serious, sometimes severe air of little children, which is a mystery of their luminous innocence in the presence of our twilight virtues. We might say that they feel themselves to be angels, and know us to be men. Then the child began to laugh, and, though her mother held her back, slipped to the ground with the indomitable energy of a little creature wishing to run. All at once she noticed the two others in their swing, stopped short, and put out her tongue as a sign of admiration. Mother Thénardier unfastened her children, took them from the swing, and said, "Play about, all three."

Children of that age soon make acquaintance; and in a minute the little Thénardiens were playing with the new-comer at making holes in the ground, which was an immense pleasure. The new-comer was very merry; the goodness of the mother is written in the gayety of the baby. She had picked up a piece of wood which she used as a spade, and was energetically digging a grave large enough for a fly. The grave-digger's task becomes amusing when performed by a child.

The two women went on talking.

"What's the name of your youngster?"

"Cosette."

For Cosette read Euphrasie, for that was the child's real name; but the mother had converted Euphrasie into Cosette, through that gentle, graceful instinct peculiar to mothers and common people, which changes Josefa into Pepita, and Françoise into Sillette. It is a sort of derivation which upsets and disconcerts all the knowledge of etymologists. We know a grandmother who contrived to turn Theodore into Gnon.

"How old is she?"

"Going on for three."

"Just the same age as my eldest."

In the mean time the three little girls were grouped in a posture of profound anxiety and blessedness; an event had occurred. A large worm had crept out of the ground, and they were frightened, and they were in ecstasy; their radiant brows touched each other, and they looked like three heads in a halo.

"How soon children get to know one another!" Mother Thénardier exclaimed; "why, any one would swear they were three sisters."

The word was probably the spark which the other mother had been waiting for; she seized the speaker's hand, looked at her fixedly, and said:—

"Will you keep my child for me?"

The woman gave one of those starts of surprise which are neither assent nor refusal. Fantine continued:—

"You see, I cannot take the child home with me; for when a woman has a baby, it is a hard matter for her to get a situation. People are so foolish in our part. It was Heaven that made me pass in front of your inn; when I saw your little ones so pretty, so clean, so happy, it gave me a turn. I said to myself, 'She is a kind mother.' That's just it, they will be three sisters; and then it will not be long before I come back. Will you take care of my child for me?"

"We will see," said Mother Thénardier.

"I will pay six francs a month."

Here a man's voice cried from the back of the tap-room:—

"Can't be done under seven, and six months paid in advance."

"Six times seven are forty-two," said the landlady.

"I will pay it," said the mother.

"And fifteen francs more for first expenses," the man's voice added.

"Total fifty-seven francs," said Madame Thénardier; and with these figures she hummed,—

"It must be so," said a warrior bold."

"I will pay it," said the mother; "I have eighty francs, and I shall have enough left to get home on foot. I shall earn money there; and so soon as I have saved something I will come and fetch my darling."

The man's voice continued:—

"Has the little one a stock of clothing?"

"It is my husband," said Mother Thénardier.

"Of course she has clothes, poor little treasure (I knew it was your husband); and a fine stock of clothes, too,—a wonderful stock, a dozen of everything, and silk frocks like a lady. The things are in my bag."

"They must be handed over," the man's voice remarked.

"Of course," said the mother; "it would be queer if I left my child naked."

The master's face appeared.

"All right," he said.

The bargain was concluded. The mother spent the night at the inn, paid her money and left her child, fastened up her bag, which was now light, the baby's clothes being taken out, and started next morning with the intention of returning soon. Such departures are arranged calmly, but they entail despair. A neighbour's wife saw the mother going away, and went home saying:—

"I have just seen a woman crying in the street as if her heart was broken."

When Cosette's mother had gone, the man said to his wife:—

"That money will meet my bill for one hundred and ten francs, which falls due to-morrow; I was fifty francs short. It would have been protested, and I should have had a bailiff put in. You set a famous mouse-trap with your brats."

"Without suspecting it," said the woman.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST SKETCH OF TWO UGLY FIGURES

THE captured mouse was very small, but the cat is pleased even with a thin mouse. Who were the Thénardiers? We will say one word about them now, and complete the sketch hereafter. These beings belonged to the bastard class composed of vulgar upstarts and of intelligent people who have gone down in the world, which stands between the middle and lower classes, combining some of the faults of the second with nearly all the vices of the first, though without possessing the generous impulse of the working-man or the honest regularity of the tradesman.

Theirs were those dwarfed natures which easily become monstrous, when any gloomy fire accidentally warms them. There was in the woman the basis of a brute, in the man the stuff for a vagabond. Both were in the highest degree susceptible of that sort of hideous progress which is made in the direction of evil. There are crab-like souls which constantly retreat toward darkness, retrograde in life rather than advance, employ experience to augment their deformity, incessantly grow worse, and are more and more impregnated with increasing blackness. This man and woman had such souls.

Thénardier was peculiarly troublesome to the physiognomist. There are some men at whom you need only look to

distrust them, for you feel that they are shady in both directions. They are restless in regard to the rear and threatening in front. There is something of the unknown in them. We can no more answer for what they have done than for what they will do. The gloom in their glance denounces them. Merely by hearing them say a word, or seeing them make a gesture, we get a glimpse of dark secrets in their past, dark mysteries in their future. This Thénardier, could he be believed, had been a soldier,—sergeant, he said. He probably had gone through the campaign of 1815, and had even behaved rather bravely, it seems. We shall see presently how the matter really stood. The sign of his inn was an allusion to one of his exploits, and he had painted it himself; for he could do a little of everything,—badly. It was the time when the old classical romance—which, after being “Clélie,” had now become “Lodoiska,” and, though still noble, was daily growing more vulgar, and had fallen from Mademoiselle de Scudéry to Madame Bournon Malarme, and from Madame de Lafayette to Madame Barthelemy Hadot—was firing the loving souls of the portresses of Paris, and even extending its ravages to the suburbs. Madame Thénardier was just intelligent enough to read books of this nature, and lived on them. She thus drowned any brains she possessed; and so long as she remained young, and a little longer, it gave her a sort of pensive attitude toward her husband, who was a scamp of some depth, an almost grammatical ruffian, coarse and at the same time refined, but who, in matters of sentimentalism, read Pigault Lebrun, and, “in all that concerned the sex,” as he said in his jargon, was a downright and unmitigated brute. His wife was some twelve or fifteen years younger than he; and when her romantically flowing locks began to grow gray, when the Megæra was disengaged from the Pamela, she was only a stout, wicked woman who had been pampered with foolish romances. As such absurdities cannot be read with impunity, the result was that her eldest daughter was christened Eponine; as for the younger, the poor girl was all but named Gulnare, and owed

it to a fortunate diversion made by one of Ducray Duminil's romances that she was only christened Azelma.

By the way, all is not ridiculous and superficial in the curious epoch to which we are alluding, and which might be called the anarchy of baptismal names. Besides the romantic element, which we have just pointed out, there was the social symptom. It is not uncommon now for a drover's son to be called Arthur, Alfred, or Alphonse, and for a viscount — if there are any viscounts left — to be called Thomas, Pierre, or Jacques. This displacement, which gives the "elegant" name to the plebeian and the rustic name to the aristocrat, is nothing but an eddy of equality. The irresistible penetration of the new spirit is visible in this as in everything else. Beneath this apparent discord, there is a grand and deep thing, — the French Revolution.

CHAPTER III

THE LARK

IT is not enough to be bad in order to prosper; and the pot-house was in a bad way. Thanks to the traveller's fifty-seven francs, Thénardier had been able to avoid a protest, and to honour his signature; but the next month they wanted money again, and his wife took Cosette's outfit to Paris and pawned it for sixty francs. So soon as this sum was spent, the Thénardiens grew accustomed to regard the little girl as a child they had taken in through charity, and they treated her accordingly. As she had no clothes, she was dressed in the left-off chemises and petticoats of the little Thénardiens, — that is to say, in rags. She was fed on the leavings of everybody, a little better than the dog, and a little worse than the cat. Dog and cat were her usual company at dinner, for Cosette ate with them under the table off a wooden trencher like theirs.

Her mother, who had settled, as we shall see hereafter, at M. sur M., wrote, or, to speak more correctly, had a letter written every month to inquire after her child. The Thénardiers invariably replied that Cosette was getting on famously. When the first six months had passed, the mother sent seven francs for the seventh month, and continued to send the money punctually month by month. The year was not ended before Thénardier said: "A fine favour she is doing us! What does she expect us to do with her seven francs!" and he wrote to demand twelve. The mother, whom they persuaded that her child was happy and "getting on well," submitted, and sent the twelve francs.

Some natures cannot love on one side without hating on the other. Mother Thénardier passionately loved her own two daughters, which made her detest the stranger. It is sad to think that a mother's love can have such ugly aspects. Though Cosette occupied so little room, it seemed to her as if it were taken from her children, and that the little one diminished the air her daughters breathed. This woman, like many women of her class, had a certain amount of caresses and another of blows and insults to expend daily. If she had not had Cosette, it is certain that her daughters, idolized though they were, would have received the entire amount; but the strange child did them the service to divert the blows to herself, while the daughters received only the caresses. Cosette never made a movement that did not bring down on her head a hail-storm of violent and unmerited chastisement. The poor, weak child, who knew nothing of this world, or of God, incessantly punished, scolded, cuffed, and beaten, saw by her side two little creatures like herself, who lived in radiant happiness.

As Madame Thénardier was unkind to Cosette, Eponine and Azelma were the same; for children at that age are copies of their mother,—the size is smaller, that is all. A year passed, then another, and people said in the village: "Those Thénardiers are worthy people. They are not well off, and yet they bring up a poor child left on their hands."

Cosette was supposed to be deserted by her mother. Thénardier, however, having learned in some obscure way that the child was probably illegitimate, and that the mother could not acknowledge it, insisted on fifteen francs a month, saying that "the creature" was growing and "*eating*," and threatening to send her back. "She must not play the fool with me," he shouted, "or I'll fire her brat right into her mysteries about nothing. I must have more." The mother paid the fifteen francs. Year by year the child grew, and so did her wretchedness. So long as Cosette was little, she was the scapegoat of the two other children; so soon as she began to develop a little,—that is to say, even before she was five years old,—she became the servant of the house, "At five years," the reader will say, "that is improbable;" but, alas! it is true. Social suffering begins at any age. Have we not recently seen the trial of a certain Dumollard, an orphan, who turned bandit, and who from the age of five, as the official documents tell us, was alone in the world and "worked for a living and stole"? Cosette was made to go on errands, sweep the rooms, the yard, the sidewalk, wash the dishes, and even carry heavy bundles. The Thénardiens considered themselves the more justified in acting thus, because the mother, who was still at M. sur M., was beginning to pay badly, and was several months in arrear.

If the mother had returned to Montfermeil at the end of three years, she would not have recognized her child. Cosette, so pretty and ruddy on her arrival in that house, was now thin and sickly. She had a singularly timid look. "A sly thing!" said the Thénardiens. Injustice had made her sulky, and wretchedness had made her ugly. Nothing was left but her fine eyes, which were painful to look at, because, as they were so large, it seemed as if a greater amount of sadness were visible in them. It was heart-rending to see this poor child, scarce six years of age, shivering in winter under her calico rags, and sweeping the sidewalk before daybreak, with an enormous broom in her small red hands and a tear in her large eyes.

The country people called her "the lark." The lower classes, who are fond of metaphors, took a fancy to give this name to the poor, trembling, frightened, shivering little creature, no bigger than a bird, who was always the first awake in the house and the village, and ever in the street or the fields by daybreak.

But this poor lark never sang.

BOOK V

THE DESCENT

CHAPTER I

PROGRESS IN BLACK BEAD MAKING

BUT what had become of the mother who, according to the people of Montfermeil, had deserted her child? Where was she, what was she doing? After leaving her little Cosette with the Thénardiens, she had continued her journey and reached M. sur M. Fantine had been away from home for ten years; and while she had slowly descended from misery to misery, her native town had prospered. About two years before, one of those industrial facts which are the events of small towns, had taken place. The details are important, and we think it useful to develop them, we might almost say, to underline them.

From time immemorial M. sur M. had as its special industry the imitation of English jet and German black beads. This trade had hitherto only vegetated, owing to the cost of the raw material, which reacted on the manufacturer. At the time when Fantine returned to M. sur M., an extraordinary change had taken place in the production of "black goods." Toward the close of 1815, a man, a stranger, had settled in the town, and had the idea of substituting gum lac for rosin in this trade, and, in bracelets particularly, clasps of bent metal for welded ones. This slight change was a revolution; it prodigiously reduced the cost of the raw ma-

terial, which, in the first place, made it possible to raise wages, — a benefit to the town; secondly, to improve the workmanship, — an advantage to the consumer; and, thirdly, to sell the goods cheap, while trebling the profit, — an advantage to the manufacturer.

Thus three results proceeded from one idea. In less than three years the inventor of the process became rich, which is a good thing, and made all about him rich, which is better. He was a stranger in the district. No one knew anything of his origin, and but little of his beginning. It was said that he entered the town with very little money, — a few hundred francs at most; but with this small capital, placed at the service of an ingenious idea, and made fruitful by method and thought, he made his own fortune and that of the town. On his arrival at M. sur M., he had the dress, manners, and language of a working-man. It appears that on the very December night when he made his obscure entrance into M. sur M., with his knapsack on his back and a knotted stick in his hand, a great fire broke out in the Town Hall. This man rushed into the midst of the flames, and at the risk of his life saved two children who happened to belong to the chief of police; hence no one dreamed of asking for his passport. Afterward his name was learned; he called himself Father Madeleine.

CHAPTER II

MADELEINE

HE was a man of about fifty, with a preoccupied air, and he was kind-hearted. That was all that could be said of him.

Thanks to the rapid progress of the trade which he had so admirably remodelled, M. sur M. became a place of considerable importance. Spain, which consumes an immense

amount of jet, gave large orders for it annually; and in this trade M. sur M. almost rivalled London and Berlin. Father Madeleine's profits were so great that, after the second year he was able to build a large factory, in which were two spacious workshops,—one for men, the other for women. Any one who was hungry had only to present himself there, and was sure to find employment and bread. Father Madeleine expected from the men good-will, from the women purity, and from all honesty. He divided the work-shops in order to separate the sexes, and to enable the women and girls to remain virtuous. On this point he was inflexible, and it was the only one on which he was at all intolerant. This severity was the more justifiable because M. sur M. was a garrison town, and opportunities for corruption abounded. Altogether his arrival had been a benefit, and his presence was a providence. Before Father Madeleine came, everything languished, and now all led the healthy life of work. A powerful circulation warmed and penetrated everything; dull seasons and wretchedness were unknown. There was not a pocket, however obscure, in which there was not a little money, nor a home so poor that there was not a little joy in it. Father Madeleine, as we have said, employed everybody; he only insisted on one thing,—Be an honest man! Be a good girl!

As we have said, in the midst of this activity, of which he was the cause and the pivot, Father Madeleine made his fortune; but, singularly enough in a plain man of business, this did not appear to be his chief care. He seemed to think a great deal of others and but little of himself. In 1820, he was known to have a sum of 630,000 francs to his credit in Lafitte's bank; but before he put that amount on one side he had spent more than a million for the town and the poor. The hospital was badly endowed, and he added ten beds. M. sur M. is divided into an upper and a lower town; the latter, in which he lived, had only one school, a shabby edifice falling to ruin; he built two,—one for boys and one for girls. He paid the two teachers from his own pocket an amount

double their poor official salary, and to some one who expressed surprise, he said, "The two highest functionaries of the State are the nurse and the schoolmaster." He established at his own expense an infant school,—a thing at that time almost unknown in France,—and a charitable fund for old and infirm workmen. As his factory was a centre, a new district in which there was a large number of indigent families, rapidly sprang up around it, and he opened a free dispensary.

In the beginning, kind souls said, "He is a fellow who wants to grow rich;" when it was seen that he enriched the town before enriching himself, the same charitable souls said, "He is ambitious." This seemed the more likely because he was religious, and even practised his religion to a certain extent,—a thing which was admired in those days. He went regularly to hear low mass on Sundays; and the local deputy, who scented rivalry everywhere, soon became alarmed at his piety. This deputy, who had been a member of the legislative body of the empire, shared the religious ideas of a father of the Oratory, known by the name of Fouché, Duke d'Otranto, whose creature and friend he had been. But when he saw the rich manufacturer Madeleine go to seven o'clock low mass, he scented a possible candidate, and resolved to go beyond him. He chose a Jesuit confessor, and went to high mass and vespers. Ambition at that time was, in the true sense of the term, a steeple-chase. The poor profited by the alarm, for the honourable deputy founded two beds at the hospital, which made twelve.

However, in 1819, a report spread one morning through the town that, on the recommendation of the prefect, and in consideration of services rendered the town, Father Madeleine was about to be made by the king mayor of M——. Those who had declared the new-comer an ambitious man, eagerly seized this opportunity to exclaim, "There! what did we say?" All M—— was in an uproar; for the rumour was well founded. A few days after, the appointment appeared in the "Moniteur," and the next day Father Made-

leine declined the honour. In the same year, the new processes invented by him were shown at the Industrial Exhibition; and on the report of the jury, the king made the inventor a knight of the Legion of Honour. There was a fresh commotion in the little town. Well, it was the cross he wanted! Father Madeleine declined the cross. Decidedly the man was an enigma, but charitable souls got out of the difficulty by saying, "After all, he is a sort of adventurer."

As we have seen, the country owed him much, and the poor owed him everything. He was so useful that he could not prevent people from honouring him, and so gentle that people could not help loving him. His work-people, especially, adored him; and he bore this adoration with a sort of melancholy gravity. When he was known to be rich, "people in society" bowed to him, and he was called in the town Monsieur Madeleine; but his workmen and the children continued to call him Father Madeleine, and this was the thing best suited to make him smile. In proportion as he ascended, invitations were showered upon him, and society claimed him as its own. The prim little drawing-rooms, which were, of course, closed to the artisan, opened their doors wide to the millionaire. A thousand advances were made to him, but he refused them all. Here again charitable souls were not thrown out. "He is an ignorant man, of poor education. No one knows where he came from. He could not pass muster in society, and it is doubtful whether he can read." When he was seen to be earning money, they said, "He is a tradesman;" when he scattered his money, they said, "He is ambitious;" when he rejected honours, they said, "He is an adventurer," and when he repulsed society, they said, "He is a brute."

In 1820, five years after his arrival at M——, the services he had rendered the town were so brilliant, the desire of the whole country was so unanimous, that the king again made him mayor of the town. He again refused, but the prefect would not accept his refusal. All the notables came to entreat him, the people supplicated him on the open streets;

and the pressure was so great that he eventually assented. It was noticed that what appeared specially to determine him was the almost angry remark of an old woman, who cried to him from her door: "A good mayor is useful. A man should not draw back from the good he can do." This was the third phase of his ascent. Father Madeleine had become Monsieur Madeleine. and Monsieur Madeleine became Mr. Mayor.

CHAPTER III

SUMS LODGED AT LAFITTE'S

FATHER MADELEINE remained as simple as on the first day. He had gray hair, a serious eye, the bronzed complexion of a working-man, and the thoughtful face of a philosopher. He habitually wore a broad-brimmed hat, and a long coat of coarse cloth, buttoned up to the chin. He performed his duties as mayor, but beyond that he led a solitary life. He spoke to few persons, liked to escape from compliments, smiled to save himself from talking, and gave to save himself from smiling. The women said of him, "What a good-natured bear!" His great pleasure was to walk about the fields. He always took his meals alone, with an open book before him, and he had a well-selected library. He was fond of books, for they are cool but sure friends. In proportion as leisure came with fortune, he seemed to employ it in cultivating his mind. It was noticed that with each year he spent in M—— his language became more polite, more choice, and more gentle.

He was fond of taking a gun with him on his walks, but rarely fired. When he did happen to do so, he had an infallible aim, which was almost terrific. He never killed a harmless animal or a small bird. Though he was no longer young, he was said to possess prodigious strength. He lent

a hand to any one who needed it, raised a fallen horse, put his shoulder to a wheel stuck in the mud, or stopped a runaway bull by the horns. His pockets were always full of small change when he went out, and empty when he came home. Whenever he passed through the village, the ragged children ran merrily after him, and surrounded him like a swarm of gnats. It was supposed that he must have formerly lived a rustic life, for he had all sorts of useful secrets which he taught the peasants. He showed them how to destroy blight in wheat by sprinkling about the granary and pouring into the cracks of the boards a solution of common salt, and to get rid of the weevils by hanging up everywhere, on the walls and roofs, flowering orviot. He had recipes to extirpate, from arable land, tares and other parasitic plants which injure wheat, and would protect a rabbit hutch from rats by the mere smell of a little Guinea pig, which he placed in it.

One day he saw some countrymen very busy in tearing up nettles. He looked at the pile of uprooted and already withered plants, and said, "They are dead, and yet they are good if you know how to use them. When nettles are young, the tops are an excellent vegetable. When they are old, they have threads and fibres like hemp and flax. Nettle cloth is as good as linen. When chopped up, nettles are good for fowls; when pounded, excellent for horned cattle. Nettle-seed mixed with fodder makes the coats of cattle shine; and the root mixed with salt produces a fine yellow dye. The nettle also makes excellent hay, which can be mown twice; and what does it require? — a little earth, no care, and no cultivation. The only thing is that the seed falls as it ripens, and is difficult to garner. If a little care were taken, the nettle would be useful; but being neglected, it becomes injurious, and is killed. How many men are like nettles!" He added after a moment's silence: "My friends, remember this: there are no bad herbs or bad men; there are only bad cultivators."

The children also loved him, because he could make them

pretty little toys of straw and cocoa-nut shells. When he saw a church door hung with black, he went in. He sought a funeral as other persons seek a christening. The misfortunes of others attracted him, owing to his great gentleness. He mingled with friends in mourning, and with the priests around a coffin. He seemed fond of hearing those mournful psalms which are full of the vision of another world. With his eyes fixed on heaven, he listened, with a sort of aspiration toward all the mysteries of Infinitude, to the sad voices singing on the brink of the dark abyss of death. He did a number of good actions, while as careful to hide them as if they were bad. He would quietly enter houses at night, and furtively ascend the stairs. A poor fellow, on returning to his garret, would find that his door had been opened, sometimes forced, during his absence. The man would cry that a robber had been there; but when he entered, the first thing he saw was a gold coin left on the table. The "robber" who had been there was Father Madeleine.

He was affable and sad. People said, "There is a rich man who does not look proud; a lucky man who does not look happy." Some persons asserted that he was a mysterious character, and declared that no one ever entered his bedroom, which was a real anchorite's cell, furnished with winged hour-glasses, and embellished with cross-bones and skulls. This was so often repeated that certain elegant and spiteful young ladies of M—— came to him one day, and said, "Mr. Mayor, *do* show us your bedroom, for people say that it is a grotto." He smiled and led them straightway to the "grotto;" they were terribly punished for their curiosity, as it was a bedroom merely containing mahogany furniture as ugly as all furniture of that sort, and hung with a paper at twelve sous a roll. They saw nothing unusual but two double-branched candlesticks of an antiquated pattern, standing on the mantelpiece, which seemed to be silver "because they were hall-marked,"—a remark full of the wit of small towns. People did not the less continue to repeat, however, that no one ever entered this bedroom, and that it was

a hermitage, a hole, a tomb. They also whispered that he had "immense" sums lodged with Lafitte, and with this peculiarity, that they were always at his immediate disposal; "so that," they added, "M. Madeleine could go any morning to Lafitte's, sign a receipt, and carry off his two or three millions of francs in ten minutes." In reality these "two or three millions" were reducible, as we have said, to six hundred and thirty or forty thousand francs.

CHAPTER IV

M. MADELEINE GOES INTO MOURNING

AT the beginning of 1821, the papers announced the decease of M. Myriel, bishop of D——, "surnamed Monseigneur Bienvenu," who died in the odour of sanctity at the age of eighty-two. The bishop of D——, to add a detail omitted by the papers, had been blind for several years, and was content to be blind, as his sister was by his side.

Let us say parenthetically, that to be blind and to be loved is one of the most strangely exquisite forms of happiness upon this earth, where nothing is perfect. To have continually at your side a wife, a sister, a daughter, a charming being, who is there because you need her, and because she cannot do without you; to know yourself indispensable to a woman who is necessary to you; to be able constantly to gauge her affection by the amount of her presence which she gives you, and to say to yourself: "She devotes all her time to me because I possess her entire heart;" to see her thoughts in default of her face; to prove the fidelity of one being amidst the eclipse of the world; to catch the rustle of a dress like the sound of wings; to hear her come and go, leave the room, return, talk, sing, and then to dream that you are the centre of those steps, those words, those songs; to

manifest at every moment your own personal attraction, and feel yourself powerful in proportion to your weakness; to become, in darkness and through darkness, the planet round which this angel gravitates,—but few felicities equal this. The supreme happiness of life is the conviction that you are loved for yourself, or, more correctly speaking, loved in spite of yourself; and this conviction the blind man has. In his distress, to be served is to be caressed. Does he want for anything? No. When you possess love, you have not lost the light. And what love! a love wholly made of virtue. There is no blindness where there is certainty. The groping soul seeks a soul and finds it; and this found and tested soul is a woman. A hand supports you,—it is hers; lips touch your brow,—they are hers; you hear a breath close to you,—it is hers.

To have everything of hers, from her worship to her pity, never to be left, to have this gentle weakness to succour you, to lean on this unbending reed, to touch Providence with your hands, and be able to take it in your arms,—O God made tangible, what rapture is this! The heart, that obscure celestial flower, expands mysteriously, and you would not exchange this shadow for all the light! The angel soul is there, ever there. If she go away, it is to return; she disappears like a dream, and reappears like reality. You feel warmth approach,—it is she. You overflow with serenity, ecstasy, and gayety; you are a sunbeam in the night. And then the thousand little attentions, the nothings which are so enormous in that void! The most ineffable accents of the human voice employed to lull you, and taking the place of the vanished universe. You are caressed with the soul; you see nothing, but you feel yourself adored. It is a paradise of darkness.

It was from this paradise that Monseigneur Bienvenu passed to the other. The announcement of his death was copied by the local paper of M——, and on the next day M. Madeleine appeared dressed in black, with crape on his hat. The mourning was noticed in the town, and the people gas-

siped about it; for it seemed to throw light on M. Madeleine's origin. It was concluded that he was somehow connected with the bishop. "He is in mourning for the bishop," was said in drawing-rooms; this added inches to M. Madeleine's stature, and suddenly gave him a certain consideration in the noble world of M——. The microscopic Faubourg St. Germain of the town thought of raising the quarantine of M. Madeleine, the probable relation of a bishop; and M. Madeleine remarked the promotion he had obtained in the increased courtesies of the old ladies, and the greater amount of smiles from the young. One evening a lady belonging to this great world, curious by right of seniority, ventured to say, "Mr. Mayor, you are doubtless a cousin of the late bishop of D——?"

He answered, "No, madame."

"But," the dowager went on, "you wear mourning for him."

"In my youth I was a footman in his family," was the answer.

Another thing noticed was, that when a young Savoyard passed through the town looking for chimneys to sweep, the mayor sent for him, asked his name, and gave him money. The Savoyard boys told each other of this, and a great many passed through M——.

CHAPTER V

VAGUE FLASHES ON THE HORIZON

BY degrees, and with time, all slander and opposition died out. At first there had been calumnies against M. Madeleine,—a penalty to which all rising men must submit; then it was only back-biting; then it was only malice; and eventually all this faded away. The respect felt for

him became complete, unanimous, and cordial, and there came a time, in 1821, when the name of the mayor was uttered at M—— in almost the same tone that “my lord bishop” was said at D—— in 1815. People came from ten leagues round to consult M. Madeleine; he settled disputes, prevented lawsuits, and reconciled enemies. Everybody was willing to accept him as arbiter; and it seemed as if he had the book of natural law for his soul. It was a sort of contagious veneration, which in six or seven years spread all over the country-side.

Only one man in the town and district resisted this contagion, and, whatever M. Madeleine might do, remained rebellious to it, as if a sort of incorruptible and imperturbable instinct kept him on his guard. It would appear, in fact, as if there were in certain men a genuine animal instinct, though pure and honest as all instincts are, which creates sympathies and antipathies; which fatally separates one nature from another; which never hesitates; which is never troubled, is never silent, and never contradicts itself; which is clear in its obscurity, infallible, imperious; refractory to all the counsels of intelligence and all the solvents of reason, and which, whatever the way in which destinies are made, surely warns the man-dog of the man-cat, and the man-fox of the presence of the man-lion. It often happened when M. Madeleine passed along a street calm, kindly, and greeted by the blessings of all, that a tall man, dressed in an iron-gray frock coat, armed with a stout cane, and wearing a hat with turned-down brim, turned suddenly and watched him till he disappeared; folding his arms, shaking his head slowly, and raising his upper lip with the lower as high as his nose,—a sort of significant grimace, which might be translated, “Who is that man? I am certain that I have seen him somewhere. At any rate, I am not his dupe.”

This person, who was grave, with an almost menacing gravity, was one of those men who, though only noticed for a moment, preoccupy the observer. His name was Javert; he belonged to the police, and performed at M—— the pain-

ful but useful duties of an inspector. He had not seen M. Madeleine's beginning, for he was indebted for the post he occupied to the secretary of Count Anglés, at that time prefect of police at Paris. When Javert came to M—— the great manufacturer's fortune was made, and Father Madeleine had become Monsieur Madeleine. Some police officers have a peculiar face, which is complicated by an air of baseness, blended with an air of authority. Javert had this face, without the baseness. It is our conviction that if souls were visible we should distinctly see the strange fact that every individual of the human species corresponds to some one species of the animal creation; and we might easily recognize the truth, which has as yet scarce occurred to the thinker, that, from the oyster to the eagle, from the hog to the tiger, all animals are in man, and that each of them is in some man, — at times, several of them at once. Animals are nothing else than the figures of our virtues and our vices wandering before our eyes,— the visible phantoms of our souls. God shows these to us in order to make us reflect; but as animals are only shadows, God has not made them capable of education in the complete sense of the term, for of what use would it be? On the other hand, our souls being realities and having an aim of their own, God has endowed them with intelligence,— that is to say, the possibility of education. Social education, properly carried out, can always draw out of a soul, no matter what its nature, such utility as it contains. This be it said, of course, from the limited point of view of life apparent here on earth, without prejudging the weighty question of the anterior or ulterior personality of the beings which are not man. The visible *ego* in no wise justifies the thinker in denying the latent *ego*. This qualification being made, let us go on.

Now, if the reader will admit with me for a moment that in every man there is one of the animal species of creation, it will be easy for us to say what Javert the policeman was. Austrian peasants are convinced that in every litter of wolves there is a dog, which is killed by the mother; for, otherwise,

when it grew up it would devour the other whelps. Give a human face to this dog-son of a wolf, and we shall have Javert. He was born in prison; his mother was a fortune-teller, whose husband was in the galleys. When he grew up, he thought that he was beyond the pale of society, and despaired of ever entering it. He noticed that society inexorably keeps at bay two classes of men,—those who attack it, and those who guard it. He had only a choice between these two classes, and at the same time felt within him an indescribable fund of rigidity, regularity and probity, combined with an inexpressible hatred of the race of Bohemians to which he belonged. He entered the police, got on, and at the age of forty was an inspector. In his youth he was engaged in the southern galleys.

Before going further, let us explain the words “human face” which we applied just now to Javert. His human face consisted of a snub-nose, with two deep nostrils, toward which enormous whiskers mounted on his cheeks. You felt uncomfortable the first time that you saw those two forests and those two caverns. When Javert laughed, which was rare and terrible, his thin lips parted, and displayed, not only his teeth, but his gums, and a savage flat fold formed round his nose, such as is seen on the muzzle of a wild beast. Javert when serious was a bull-dog; when he laughed he was a tiger. To sum up, he had but little skull and plenty of jaw; his hair hid his forehead and fell over his brows; he had between his eyes a central and permanent frown, like a star of anger, an obscure glance, a pinched and formidable mouth, and an air of ferocious command.

This man was made up of two very simple and relatively excellent feelings, which he almost rendered bad by exaggerating them,—respect for authority and hatred of rebellion; and in his eyes, robbery, murder, and every crime were only forms of rebellion. He enveloped in a species of blind faith everybody in the service of the State, from the prime minister down to the game-keeper. He covered with contempt, aversion, and disgust every one who had crossed the

legal threshold of evil. He was absolute, and admitted of no exceptions; on the one hand he said: "A functionary cannot be mistaken, a magistrate can do no wrong;" on the other he said: "They are irremediably lost; no good can come of them." He fully shared the opinion of those extreme minds which attribute to human law some power of making, or, if you like, of proving the existence of demons, and which place a Styx at the bottom of society. He was stoical, stern, and austere; a sad dreamer, humble yet haughty, like all fanatics. His glance was like a gimlet, cold and piercing. His whole life lay in the two words, watchfulness and supervision. He had introduced a straight line into what is the most torturous thing in the world; he was conscious of his usefulness, had religious respect for his duties, and was a spy just as some men are priests. Woe to the wretch who fell into his clutches! He would have arrested his father if escaping from prison, and denounced his mother had she broken her ban; and he would have done it with that sort of inner satisfaction conferred by virtue. With all this he led a life of privation, isolation, self-denial, chastity,—never a distraction. He was the embodiment of duty, the police understood as the Spartans understood Sparta, a pitiless watchman, fiercely honest, a marble-hearted spy, a Brutus combined with a Vidocq.

Javert's entire person expressed the man who spies and who hides. The mystic school of Joseph de Maistre which at this epoch was seasoning with high cosmogony what were called the ultra journals, would not have failed to say that Javert was a symbol. His forehead could not be seen, for it was hidden by his hat; his eyes could not be seen, because they were lost under his eyebrows; his chin was plunged into his cravat, his hands were covered by his cuffs, and his cane was carried under his coat. But when the opportunity came, there suddenly emerged from all this shadow, as from an ambush, an angular, narrow forehead, a fatal glance, a threatening chin, enormous hands, and a monstrous rattan. In his leisure moments, which were few, he read, though he

hated books, and therefore he was not utterly ignorant, as could be recognized by a certain emphasis in his language. As we have said, he had no vice; when satisfied with himself, he indulged in a pinch of snuff, and that was his connecting link with humanity. Our readers will readily understand that Javert was the terror of all that class whom the yearly statistics of the minister of justice class under the head, "Without regular occupation." The name of Javert, if uttered, set them to flight; the face of Javert, if seen, petrified them. Such was this terrible man.

Javert was like an eye ever fixed on M. Madeleine,—an eye full of suspicion and conjecture. M. Madeleine noticed it at last; but he considered it a matter of no importance. He did not even ask Javert his motive; he neither sought nor shunned him, and endured his annoying and almost oppressive gaze without appearing to notice it. He treated Javert as he did every one else, easily and kindly. From some remarks dropped by Javert, it was supposed that he had secretly sought, with that curiosity belonging to the breed, and in which there is as much instinct as will, all the previous traces which Father Madeleine might have left. He seemed to know, and sometimes said covertly, that some one had obtained certain information in a certain district about a certain family which had disappeared. Once he happened to say, speaking to himself, "I believe that I have got him;" then he was lost in thought for three days without saying a word. It seemed that the thread which he fancied he held, was broken. However,—and this is the necessary corrective for the too absolute meaning which certain remarks might offer,—there cannot be any really infallible theory in a human creature, and it is the peculiarity of instinct that it may be confused, thrown out, routed; if not, it would be superior to intelligence, and the brute would have a better insight than man. Javert was evidently somewhat disconcerted by M. Madeleine's complete naturalness and calmness. One day, however, his strange manner seemed to produce an impression on M. Madeleine. The occasion was as follows.

CHAPTER VI

FATHER FAUCHELEVENT

AS M. Madeleine was passing one morning through an unpaved lane in the town, he heard a noise, and saw a group at some distance. He went towards it. An old man, known as Father Fauchelevant, had fallen under his cart, and his horse was lying on the ground. This Fauchelevant was one of the few enemies M. Madeleine still had at this time. When M. Madeleine came to those parts, Fauchelevant, an ex-notary and a tolerably well-educated fellow, was doing badly in business, and he saw the simple workman grow rich, while he, his superior, was ruined. This filled him with jealousy, and he did all in his power, on every possible occasion, to injure M. Madeleine. Then bankruptcy came; and in his old age, having only a horse and cart left, and no family, he had turned carter to earn a living.

The horse had both legs broken and could not get up, while the old man was caught between the wheels. The fall had been so unfortunate that the whole weight of the cart rested on his chest; and it was heavily loaded. Fauchelevant uttered lamentable groans. Attempts had been made, though in vain, to draw him out; but any irregular effort, any clumsy help or shock, might kill him. It was impossible to extricate him except by raising the cart from below, and Javert, who came up at the moment of the accident, had sent to fetch a jack-screw. When M. Madeleine appeared, the mob made way respectfully.

"Help!" cried Fauchelevant. "Is there no good soul who will save an old man?"

M. Madeleine turned to the spectators.

"Have you a jack-screw?"

"They have gone to fetch one," answered a peasant.

"How soon will it be here?"

"Well, they went to the nearest place,—Flachot the blacksmith's; but it don't matter: it will take a good quarter of an hour."

"A quarter of an hour!" exclaimed Madeleine.

It had rained on the previous night, the ground was soaked, the cart sank deeper at every moment, and crushed the old man's chest more and more. It was evident that his ribs would be broken within five minutes.

"It is impossible to wait a quarter of an hour," said Madeleine to the peasants who were looking on.

"We must."

"But do you not see that the cart is sinking into the ground?"

"Hang it, so it is!"

"Listen to me," continued Madeleine; "there is still room enough for a man to slip under the cart, and raise it with his back. It will only take half a minute, and the poor man can be drawn out. Is there any one here who has strong loins and a kind heart? There are five louis to be earned."

No one stirred.

"Ten louis," said Madeleine.

The spectators looked down, and one of them muttered, "A man would have to be deucedly strong, and besides, he would run a risk of being smashed."

"Come," resumed Madeleine, "twenty louis."

The same silence.

"It is not good-will they lack," cried a voice.

Madeleine turned and recognized Javert; he had not noticed him when he came up. Javert continued:—

"It is strength. A man would have to be tremendously strong to lift a cart like that on his back."

Then, looking fixedly at M. Madeleine, he continued, laying a marked stress on every word he uttered:—

"Monsieur Madeleine, I never knew but *one* man capable of doing what you ask."

Madeleine started, but Javert continued carelessly, though without taking his eyes off him.

"He was a galley-slave."

"Indeed!" said Madeleine.

"At the Toulon galleys."

Madeleine turned pale; but the cart was slowly settling down, and Father Fauchelevant was screaming:—

"I am choking; it is breaking my ribs; a jack-screw! something — oh!"

M. Madeleine looked around him.

"Is there no one here willing to earn twenty louis and save this poor man's life?"

No one stirred, and Javert repeated:—

"I never knew but one man capable of acting as a jack, and it was that convict."

"Oh, it is crushing me!" the old man yelled.

M. Madeleine raised his head, met Javert's falcon eye still fixed on him, gazed at the motionless peasants, and smiled sadly. Then, without a word, he fell on his knees, and, ere the crowd had time to utter a cry, was under the cart. There was a frightful moment of expectation and silence. M. Madeleine, almost flat on his stomach under the tremendous weight, twice tried in vain to bring his elbows up to his knees. The peasants shouted: "Father Madeleine, come out!" And old Fauchelevant himself said, "Monsieur Madeleine, go away! I must die, so leave me; you will be killed too."

M. Madeleine made no answer; the spectators gasped, the wheels continued to sink, and it was now almost impossible for him to get out from under the cart. All at once the enormous mass shook, the cart slowly rose, and the wheels half emerged from the rut. A stifled voice cried, "Make haste! help!" It was M. Madeleine, who had made a last effort.

They rushed forward, for the devotion of one man had restored strength and courage to all. The cart was lifted by twenty arms, and old Fauchelevant was saved. M. Madeleine rose; he was livid, although dripping with perspiration; his clothes were torn and covered with mud. The old man kissed his knees and called him his saviour, while M.

Madeleine wore a strange expression of happy and celestial suffering, and he turned his placid eye on Javert, who was still looking at him.

CHAPTER VII

FAUCHELEVENT BECOMES A GARDENER AT PARIS

FAUCHELEVENT had dislocated his knee-cap in his fall, and Father Madeleine had him carried to an infirmary he had established in his factory for the workmen, and which was managed by two sisters of charity. The next morning the old man found a thousand-franc note by his bedside, with a line in Madeleine's handwriting: "Payment for your cart and horse, which I have bought." The cart was smashed and the horse dead. Fauchelevant recovered, but his leg remained stiff, and hence M. Madeleine, by the recommendation of the sisters and his priest, procured him a situation as gardener at a convent in the St. Antoine quarter of Paris.

Some time after, M. Madeleine was made mayor; the first time Javert saw him wearing the scarf which gave him all authority in the town, he felt that sort of excitement a dog would feel which scented a wolf in its master's clothes. From this moment he avoided him as much as he could. When duty imperatively compelled him, and he could not do otherwise than appear before the mayor, he addressed him with profound respect.

The prosperity created in M—— by Father Madeleine had, in addition to the visible signs which we have described, another symptom, which, though not visible, was not the less significant, for it is one that never deceives. When the population suffers, when work is scarce and trade bad, tax-payers exhaust and exceed the time granted them, and the State

spends a good deal of money in enforcing payment. When work abounds, when the country is happy and rich, the taxes are paid cheerfully, and cost the State little. We may say that wretchedness and the public exchequer have an infallible thermometer in the cost of collecting the taxes. In seven years these costs had been reduced three-fourths in the district of M——, a fact which caused it to be frequently quoted by M. de Villele, at that time minister of finance.

Such was the state of the town when Fantine returned to it. No one remembered her, but luckily the door of M. Madeleine's factory was like a friendly face; she presented herself at it, and was admitted to the women's workroom. As the trade was quite new to her, she was awkward and earned but small wages; but that was enough. She had solved the problem,— she was earning her livelihood.

CHAPTER VIII

MADAME VICTURNIEN SPENDS THIRTY FRANCS ON MORALITY

WHEN Fantine saw that she could gain her living, she had a moment of joy. To live honestly by her own toil, what a favour of Heaven! The taste for work really came back to her. She bought a looking-glass, enjoyed seeing in it her youth, her lovely hair, and her fine teeth; forgot many things, thought only of Cosette and her possible future, and was almost happy. She hired a small room and furnished it, on credit, to be paid for out of her future earnings,— this was a relic of her irregular habits.

Not being able to say that she was married, she was very careful not to drop a word about her child. At the outset, as we have seen, she paid the Thénardiens punctually; and as she could only sign her name, she was compelled to write to them through the agency of a public letter-writer. It was

noticed that she wrote frequently. It began to be whispered in the shop that Fantine "wrote letters," and was "carrying on."

No one spies the actions of other persons so much as those whom they do not concern. Why does such an one never come home till nightfall? Why does So-and-so never hang up his key on Thursdays? Why does he always take back streets? Why does Madame—— always get out of her coach before reaching her house? Why does she send out to buy a quire of note-paper, when she has a desk full? and so on. There are people who, in order to solve these enigmas, which are matters of utter indifference to them, spend more money, lavish more time, and take more trouble than would be required for ten good deeds; and they do it gratuitously for the pleasure, and are only paid for their curiosity with curiosity. They will follow a gentleman or a lady for whole days, will stand sentry at the corner of a street or in a gateway at night in the cold and rain, bribe messengers, intoxicate hackney coachmen and footmen, tip a lady's maid, and suborn a porter—why? For nothing at all; from a pure desire to see, know, and find out. It is a simple itch for talking. And frequently these secrets, when made known, these mysteries once published, these enigmas brought to daylight, entail catastrophes, duels, bankruptcies, ruin of families, to the great delight of those who "found it all out," without any personal motive, from mere instinct. It is a sad thing. Some persons are wicked solely through a desire to talk; and their conversation, which is gossip in the drawing-room, scandal in the anteroom, is like those chimneys which consume wood rapidly,—it requires a great deal of fuel; and this fuel is their neighbour.

Thus Fantine was watched; and more than one girl was jealous of her fair hair and white teeth. It was noticed that she often turned and wiped away a tear in the shop; this was when she was thinking of her child, perhaps also of the man she had loved. It is a painful task to break all the gloomy links which connect us with the past. It was proved that she

wrote at least twice a month, and always to the same address, and paid the postage. Some one managed to obtain the address: "M. Thénardier, Publican, Montfermeil." The public letter-writer, who could not fill his stomach with red wine without emptying his pocket of secrets, was made to talk at the wine-shop; and, in short, it was known that Fantine had a child. A gossip undertook a journey to Montfermeil, spoke to the Thénardiens, and on her return said, "I do not begrudge my thirty francs, for I have seen the child."

The gossip who did this was a Gorgon of the name of Victurnien, guardian and portress of everybody's virtue. She was fifty-six years of age, and covered the mask of ugliness with the mask of old age. A quavering voice, and a capricious mind. Astounding to say, this old woman had once been young; in her youth, in '93, she had married a monk who escaped from the cloisters in a red cap and passed over from the Cistercians to the Jacobins. She was dry, crabbed, sharp, thorny, and almost venomous,—all this in remembrance of her monk, whose widow she was, and who had considerably tamed her. At the Restoration she had turned bigot, and so energetically that the priests forgave her her monk. She had a small estate which she had bequeathed with considerable ostentation to a religious community, and she was very well considered at the Episcopal Palace of Arras. This Madame Victurnien went to Montfermeil, and when she returned said, "I have seen the child."

All this took time, and Fantine had been more than a year at the factory, when one morning the forewoman handed her fifty francs in the mayor's name, and told her that there was no more work for her, and she had better leave the town, so the mayor said. It was this very month that the Thénardiens, after asking for twelve francs instead of seven, had raised a claim for fifteen instead of twelve. Fantine was dumb-founded; she could not leave the town, for she owed her rent and for her furniture, and fifty francs would not pay those debts. She stammered a few words of entreaty, but the forewoman ordered her to leave the shop at once; moreover, Fan-

tine was but an indifferent workwoman. Crushed by shame even more than by despair, she left the factory, and returned to her room; her fault then was now known to all! She did not feel the strength to say a word; she was advised to see the mayor, but dared not do so. The mayor gave her fifty francs because he was kind, and discharged her because he was just; and she bowed her head to the sentence.

CHAPTER IX

SUCCESS OF MADAME VICTURNIEN

THE monk's widow, then, was good for something. M. Madeleine, however, knew nothing of all this. Life is full of similar combinations of events. M. Madeleine made it a rule seldom to enter the women's workroom; he had placed at its head an elderly woman whom the priest recommended, and he had entire confidence in her. She was really a respectable, firm, equitable, and just person, full of that charity which consists in giving, but not possessing to the same extent the charity which comprehends and pardons. M. Madeleine trusted to her in everything, for the best of men are often forced to delegate their authority; and it was with this full power, and the conviction that she was acting rightly, that the forewoman tried, condemned and executed Fantine. As for the fifty francs, she had given them out of a sum M. Madeleine had intrusted to her for alms and to help the work-women, and for which she did not have to account.

Fantine tried to get a servant's place in the town, and went from house to house; but no one would have anything to do with her. She could not leave the town, for the dealer to whom she was in debt for her furniture — what furniture! — said to her, "If you go away, I will have you arrested as a thief." The landlord, to whom she owed her rent, said to her,

"You are young and pretty; you can pay." She divided the fifty francs between the landlord and the dealer, gave back to the latter three-fourths of his goods, only keeping what was absolutely necessary, and found herself without work, without a trade, with only a bed, and still owing about one hundred francs. She set to work at making coarse shirts for the soldiers in garrison, and thus earned twelve sous a day, her daughter costing her ten. It was at this time that she began to fall in arrears with the Thénardiens. An old woman, however, who lit her candle for her when she came in at night, taught her the way to live in wretchedness. Behind living on little, there is living on nothing; there are two chambers, — the first is obscure, the second quite dark.

Fantine learned how to do entirely without fire in winter, how to give up a bird that cost her a halfpennyworth of seed every two days, how to make a petticoat of her blanket and a blanket of her petticoat, and how to save candles by taking your meals by the light of the opposite window. We do not know all that certain weak creatures, who have grown old in want and honesty, can get out of a sou. In the end it becomes a talent. Fantine acquired this sublime talent, and regained a little courage. At this period she said to a neighbour, "Nonsense, I say to myself; by only sleeping five hours and working all the rest of the time, I shall always manage to nearly earn my bread, at any rate. And then, when you are sad, you eat less. Well! suffering, anxiety, a little bread on the one hand and sorrow on the other,—all this will support me."

In this distress, it would have been a strange happiness to have had her daughter with her, and she thought of sending for her. But, what! make her share her destitution? and then she owed money to the Thénardiens! How was she to pay it and the travelling expenses? The old woman who had given her lessons in what may be called indigent life, was a pious creature, poor and charitable to the poor and even to the rich, who could just write her name, "Marguerite," and believed in God, which is knowledge. There are many such

virtuous people here below ; and one day they will be up above, for this life has a morrow.

At first, Fantine was so ashamed that she did not dare go out. When she was in the streets, she saw that people turned around to look at her and pointed to her. Every one stared at her, and no one bowed to her ; the cold, bitter contempt of the passers-by pierced her flesh and her soul like an east wind. In small towns an unhappy girl seems to be naked beneath the sarcasm and curiosity of all. In Paris, at least, no one knows you, and that obscurity is a garment. Oh ! how glad she would have been to be back in Paris ! Impossible. She must grow accustomed to disrepute, as she had done to poverty. Gradually she made up her mind, and after two or three months shook off her shame, and went about as if nothing had occurred. "It is no matter to me," she said. She came and went with head erect and with a bitter smile, and felt that she was growing impudent. Madame Victurnien sometimes saw her pass, from her window ; she noticed the distress of "the creature" who, thanks to her, "knew her place," and congratulated herself. The wicked have a black happiness. Excessive labour fatigued Fantine, and her little dry cough grew worse. She sometimes said to her neighbour, "Marguerite, just feel how hot my hands are !" Still, in the morning, when she combed her glorious hair, which shone like floss silk, with an old broken comb, she had a minute of happy coquetry.

CHAPTER X

RESULT OF HER SUCCESS

SHE was discharged toward the end of winter ; summer passed away, and winter returned. Short days and less work ; in winter there is no warmth, no light, no midday, for the evening is joined to the morning ; there is fog, twilight,

the window is gray, and you cannot see clearly. The sky is like a dark vault, and the sun has the look of a poor man. It is a frightful season; winter changes into stone the water of heaven and the heart of man. Her creditors pressed her; for Fantine was earning too little, and her debt had increased. The Thénardiens, being irregularly paid, constantly wrote letters, whose contents afflicted her, and whose postage ruined her. One day they wrote her that little Cosette was quite naked, cold as it was; that she needed a flannel skirt; and that her mother must send at least ten francs for the purpose. She crumpled the letter in her hands all day, and at nightfall went to a barber at the corner of the street and removed her comb. Her splendid golden hair fell to her knees.

“What fine hair!” exclaimed the barber.

“What will you give me for it?” she asked.

“Ten francs.”

“Cut it off.”

She bought a knitted skirt and sent it to the Thénardiens; it made them furious, for they wanted the money. They gave it to Eponine, and the poor Lark continued to shiver. Fantine thought, “My child is no longer cold, for I have dressed her in my hair.” She wore small round caps which hid her shorn head, and she still looked pretty in them.

A dark change took place in Fantine’s heart. When she found that she could no longer dress her hair, she began to hate all around her. She had long shared the universal veneration for Father Madeleine; but, through the constant iteration that he had discharged her and was the cause of her misfortune, she grew to hate him too, and worse than the rest. When she passed the factory at the time when the workers were coming out, she pretended to laugh and sing. An old work woman, who once saw her doing so, said, “That’s a girl who will come to a bad end.” She took a lover, the first who offered,—a man she did not love,—through bravado, and with rage in her heart. He was a scoundrel,—a sort of mendicant musician, an idle scamp,—who beat her, and left her, as she had chosen him, in disgust. She adored her child.

The lower she sank, the darker the gloom became around her, the more did that sweet little angel gleam in her soul. She said: "When I am rich, I shall have my Cosette with me;" and she laughed. She did not get rid of her cough, and she had cold sweats.

One day she received from the Thénardiens a letter to the following effect,—“Cosette is ill with a miliary fever, as they call it, which is very prevalent. She must have expensive drugs, and that ruins us, and we cannot pay for them any longer. If you do not send us forty francs within a week, the little one will be dead.” She burst into a loud laugh, and said to her old neighbour, “Oh, what funny people! They want forty francs; where do they expect me to get them? What fools those peasants are!” Still, she went to a staircase window and read the letter again; then she went out into the street, still laughing and singing. Some one who met her said, “What makes you so merry?” and she answered, “It is a piece of stupidity some country folk have written; they want forty francs of me, the asses!”

As she crossed the market-place, she saw a crowd surrounding a vehicle of strange shape, on the box of which a man dressed in red was haranguing. He was a quack dentist going his rounds, who offered the public complete sets of teeth, opiates, powders, and elixirs. Fantine joined the crowd and began to laugh like the rest at his harangue, in which there was slang for the mob and scientific jargon for respectable persons. The extractor of teeth saw the pretty girl laughing, and suddenly exclaimed:—

“You have fine teeth, my laughing beauty. If you like to sell me your two ivories, I will give you a napoleon apiece for them.”

“My ivories, what are they?” asked Fantine.

“Your ivories,” said the dentist, “are your two upper front teeth.”

“What a horrible idea!” exclaimed Fantine.

“Two napoleons!” grumbled a toothless old woman by her side; “there’s a lucky girl.”

Fantine ran away and stopped her ears not to hear the hoarse voice of the man, who shouted: "Think it over, my dear; two napoleons may be useful. If your heart says Yes, come to-night to the Tillac d'Argent; you will find me there."

Fantine, when she reached home, was furious, and told her good neighbour Marguerite what had happened. "Can you understand it? Is he not an abominable man? How can people like that be allowed to go about the country? Pull out my two front teeth! why, I should look horrible. Hair grows again, but teeth!— Oh, the monster! I would sooner throw myself head first out of a fifth-floor window on to the pavement. He told me he would be at the Tillac d'Argent to-night."

"And what did he offer you?" asked Marguerite.

"Two napoleons."

"That makes forty francs."

"Yes," said Fantine, "that makes forty francs."

She became thoughtful and sat down to her work. At the end of a quarter of an hour, she left the room and read Thénardier's letter again on the staircasé. When she returned she said to Marguerite:—

"Do you know what a miliary fever is?"

"Yes," said the old woman, "it is an illness."

"Does it require much medicine?"

"Oh, terrible medicine."

"How do you catch it?"

"It's a disease you get just so."

"Does it attack children?"

"Children particularly."

"Do people die of it?"

"Plenty of them," said Marguerite.

Fantine got up and read the letter once again on the staircase. At night she went out, and was seen proceeding in the direction of the Rue de Paris, where the inns are situated. The next morning, when Marguerite entered Fantine's room before daybreak, for they worked together, and thus made one candle do for both, she found her sitting on her bed, pale

and chill; her cap had fallen on her knees. The candle had been burning all night and was nearly consumed. Marguerite stopped in the door-way, horrified by this enormous extravagance, and exclaimed:—

“Oh, Lord! the candle nearly burnt out! Something must have happened.”

Then she looked at Fantine, who turned her close-shaven head toward her, and seemed to have grown ten years older since the previous day.

“Gracious Heaven!” said Marguerite, “what is the matter with you, Fantine?”

“Nothing,” answered the girl; “I am all right. My child will not die of that frightful disease for want of help, and I am satisfied.”

As she said this, she pointed to two napoleons that glistened on the table.

“Oh, Lord!” said Marguerite; “why, ’tis a fortune. Wherever did you get them from?”

“I got them,” answered Fantine.

At the same time she smiled; the candle lit up her face, and it was a bloody smile. A reddish saliva stained the corners of her lips, and she had a black hole in her mouth,—her two teeth were gone. She sent the forty francs to Montfermeil. After all, it was only a trick of the Thénardiens to get money, for Cosette was not ill.

Fantine threw her looking-glass out of the window; she had long before left her cell, on the second floor, for a garret under the roof,—one of those tenements in which the ceiling forms an angle with the floor, and you knock your head at every step. The poor man can only reach the end of his room, as the end of his destiny, by stooping more and more. She had no bed left; she had only a rag which she called a blanket, a mattress on the ground, and a bottomless chair. A little rose-tree she had, had withered away, forgotten, in a corner. In another corner she had a pail to hold water, which froze in winter, and in which the different levels of the water remained marked for a long time by rings of ice.

She had lost her shame, and now lost her coquetry; the last sign was, that she went out with dirty caps. Either through want of time or carelessness, she no longer mended her linen; and as the heels of her stockings wore out, she tucked them into her shoes. This was shown by certain perpendicular wrinkles. She mended her worn-out waist with rags of calico, which tore away at the slightest movement. The people to whom she owed money made "scenes," and allowed her no rest; she met them in the street, she met them again on her stairs. She spent night after night in weeping and thinking. Her eyes were very bright, and she felt a constant pain at the top of her left shoulder-blade, while she coughed frequently. She deeply hated Father Madeleine, and made no complaint. She sewed for seventeen hours a day; but a speculator hired all the female prisoners, at a discount, and reduced the prices of outside workers to nine sous a day. Seventeen hours' work for nine sous! Her creditors were more pitiless than ever; and the dealer, who had got back nearly all his furniture, incessantly said to her, "When are you going to pay me, you cheat?" What did they want of her? Good heavens! she felt herself hunted, and something of the wild beast was aroused in her. About the same time Thénardier wrote to her that he had decidedly been too patient, and that unless he received one hundred francs at once he would turn poor Cosette, who had scarcely recovered from her serious illness, out-of-doors, into the cold, and she must do what she could, or die if she liked. "One hundred francs!" thought Fantine; "but where is the trade in which I can earn one hundred sous in a day? Well, I will sell all that is left!"

And the unfortunate girl went on the streets.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTUS NOS LIBERAVIT

WHAT is this story of Fantine? It is society buying a slave. From whom? From misery, from hunger, from cold, from isolation, from abandonment, from destitution. Lamentable bargain! a soul for a morsel of bread! Misery offers, and society accepts.

The holy law of Christ governs our civilization, but does not yet penetrate it. Slavery is said to have disappeared from the civilization of Europe. It has not; it still exists, but it weighs down woman alone, and is called prostitution. It weighs down woman,—that is to say, grace, weakness, beauty, motherhood. This is not one of the least disgraces of man. At the point which we have reached in this lamentable drama, nothing of what she once had been was left to Fantine. In becoming mire, she had become marble; whoever touches her is chilled; she passes, she endures you, she ignores you, she is the image of dishonour and severity. Life and the social order have said their last words to her. All has happened to her that can happen. She has felt all, borne all, experienced all, suffered all, lost all, wept all; she is resigned, with that resignation which resembles indifference as death resembles sleep. She shrinks from nothing, she fears nothing. Let all the clouds fall on her, let all the ocean sweep over her; what matters it to her! She is a saturated sponge.

At least she thinks so; but it is a mistake to imagine that one has exhausted destiny and reached the end of anything.

Alas! what are all these destinies, urged on thus pell-mell? Wither go they? Why are they thus?

He who can answer this sees the whole shadow. He is one only, and His name is God.

CHAPTER XII

M. BAMATABOIS' LEISURE

THERE is in all small towns, and there was at M—— in particular, a class of young men who squander fifteen hundred francs a year in the provinces with the same air that their fellows in Paris devour two hundred thousand. They are beings of the great neutral species,— geldings, parasites, nobodies, who possess a little land, a little folly, and a little wit, who would be rustics in a drawing-room, and believe themselves gentlemen in a pot-house. They talk about “my fields, my woods, my peasants,” they hiss actresses, to prove themselves men of taste; quarrel with the officers of the garrison, to prove themselves men of war; shoot, smoke, yawn, drink, smell of tobacco, play at billiards; watch the travellers get out of the stage-coach; live at a tavern, dine at an inn; have a dog that gnaws bones under the table, and a mistress who chooses the dishes upon it; haggle over a sou, exaggerate the fashions, admire tragedy, despise women, wear out their old boots, copy London through Paris, and Paris through Pont-à-Mousson; grow stupid as they grow old, never work, are of no use, and do no great harm. Had Felix Tholomyès remained in his province and never seen Paris, he would have been one of them. If they were richer, people would say they are dandies; if poorer, they are good-for-nothings. They are simply men with nothing to do. Among these idlers there are bores and bored, dreamers, and a few scamps.

At that day, a dandy was composed of a tall collar, a big cravat, a watch and seals, three waistcoats of different colours worn one over the other,— the blue and red inside,— a short-waisted olive-coloured coat, with a swallow-tail, and a double row of silver buttons, sewn on close together, ascending to the shoulders, and trousers of a lighter olive, adorned on the seams with an indeterminate but always uneven number of

stripes, varying from one to eleven,—a limit which was never exceeded. Add to this, high-cut shoes with iron on the heels, a tall, narrow-brimmed hat, hair in a tuft, an enormous cane, and conversation improved by Potier's puns; over and above all these were spurs and a mustache, for at that period a mustache indicated the civilian, and spurs the pedestrian. The provincial dandy wore longer spurs and more ferocious mustaches. It was the period of the struggle of the South American Republics against the king of Spain, of Bolivar against Morillo. Narrow-brimmed hats were royalist, and called Morillos, while the liberals wore broad brims, which were called Bolivars.

Eight or ten months after the events described in the preceding pages, toward the beginning of January, 1823, on a night when snow had fallen, one of these dandies — a man of "right sentiments," for he wore a Morillo, and was also warmly wrapped in one of the large Spanish cloaks which at that time completed the fashionable costume in cold weather — was amusing himself by annoying a creature who was prowling about in a low-necked ball-dress, with flowers in her hair, before the window of the officers' club. This dandy was smoking, as that was a decided mark of fashion. Every time this woman passed him, he flung her, with a puff of his cigar, some remark which he fancied witty and amusing, as: "How ugly you are! — Why don't you hide your face? — You have no teeth," etc. This gentleman's name was Bama-tabois. The woman, a melancholy, decorated phantom walking backward and forward in the snow, made him no answer, did not even look at him, but still continued her walk silently and with a gloomy regularity, which every few minutes brought her under his sarcasms, like the condemned soldier running the gauntlet. The slight effect which he produced doubtless annoyed the idler, for, taking advantage of a moment when her back was turned, he crept up behind her with stealthy tread, and smothering his laughter, stooped, picked up a handful of snow, and suddenly plunged it between her bare shoulders. The girl uttered a yell, turned,

leaped like a panther on the man, and dug her nails into his face with the most frightful language that could fall from a guard-room into the gutter. These insults, vomited forth by a voice rendered hoarse by brandy, hideously issued from a mouth in which the two front teeth were really missing. It was Fantine.

At the noise, the officers left the club in a throng, the passers-by stopped, and a laughing, hooting, applauding circle was formed round these two beings, in whom it was difficult to recognize a man and a woman,—the man struggling, his hat on the ground, the woman striking with feet and fists, bareheaded, shrieking, without teeth or hair, livid with passion, horrible. All at once a tall man quickly broke through the crowd, seized the woman by her satin bodice, which was covered with mud, and said: "Follow me." The woman raised her head, and her frantic voice suddenly died away. Her eyes were glassy, she grew pale instead of being livid, and trembled with fear,—she had recognized Javert. The dandy took advantage of this incident to make his escape.

CHAPTER XIII

THE POLICE OFFICE

JAVERT thrust aside the spectators, broke through the circle, and set off with long strides for the police office at the other end of the market-place, dragging the wretched girl after him. She allowed him to do so mechanically, and neither he nor she spoke. The crowd of spectators, in a paroxysm of delight, followed them with coarse jokes, for supreme misery is an occasion for obscenities. On reaching the police office, which was a low room, heated by a stove, guarded by a sentry, and having a grated glass door opening on the street, Javert walked in with Fantine, and shut

the door after him, to the great disappointment of the curious, who stood on tiptoe, and stretched their necks in front of the dirty window trying to see. Curiosity is gluttony, and seeing is devouring.

On entering, Fantine crouched down in a corner motionless and mute like a frightened dog. The sergeant on duty brought in a lighted candle on a table. Javert sat down, took a sheet of stamped paper from his pocket, and began to write. Women of this class are by the French laws left entirely to the discretion of the police. They do what they like with them, punish them as they think proper, and confiscate, if they please, the two sorry things which they call their trade and their liberty. Javert was impassive. His grave face displayed no emotion, and yet he was seriously and deeply preoccupied. It was one of those moments in which he exercised without control, but with all the scruples of a strict conscience, his formidable discretionary power. At this instant he felt that his high stool was a tribunal, and himself the judge. He tried and he condemned. He summoned up all the ideas he possessed concerning the great thing he was doing. The more he considered the girl's deed, the more outraged he felt; for it was evident that he had just seen a crime committed. He had seen in the street, society, represented by a householder and elector, insulted and attacked by a creature beyond the pale of everything. A prostitute had assaulted a citizen, and he, Javert, had witnessed it. He wrote on silently. When he had finished, he affixed his signature, folded the paper, and said to the sergeant as he handed it to him: "Take three men and lead this girl to prison." Then he turned to Fantine, "You will have six months for it."

The wretched girl shivered.

"Six months,—six months' imprisonment!" she cried. "Six months! and only earn seven sous a day! But what will become of Cosette, my child, my child! Why, I owe more than one hundred francs to Thénardier, Mr. Inspector; do you know that?"

She dragged herself across the floor, tracked by the muddy boots of all those men, without rising, with clasped hands, and taking long strides with her knees.

“Monsieur Javert,” she said, “I ask for mercy. I assure you that I was not in the wrong. If you had seen the beginning, you would say so. I swear by our Saviour that I was not to blame. That gentleman, who was a stranger to me, put snow down my back. Has any one a right to put snow down our backs when we are walking quietly like that, and doing nobody any harm? It sent me wild, for you must know I am not very well; and, besides, he had been abusing me,—‘you are ugly, you have no teeth.’ I am well aware that I have lost my teeth. I did nothing, and said to myself, ‘This gentleman is amusing himself.’ I was civil to him, and said nothing, and it was at this moment he put the snow down my back. M. Javert, is there no one here who saw it to tell you that this is the truth? Perhaps I was wrong to get into a passion, but at the moment, as you know, people are not masters of themselves; and I am quick-tempered. And then, something so cold put down your back, at a moment when you least expect it! It was wrong to destroy the gentleman’s hat, but why did he go away? I would ask his pardon. Oh! I would willingly do so. Let me off this time. M. Javert, perhaps you do not know that in prison I can only earn seven sous a day. It is not the fault of the government, but you only earn seven sous, and just fancy! I have one hundred francs to pay, or my child will be turned into the street. Oh, I cannot have her with me, for what I do is so bad! Oh, my Cosette, oh, my little angel, whatever will become of you, poor darling! I must tell you that the Thénardiens are inn-keepers, peasants, and unreasonable. They insist on having their money. Oh, do not send me to prison. You see, the little thing will be turned into the streets in the middle of winter to go where she can, and you must take pity on her, my kind M. Javert. If she were older she could earn her living, but at her age it is impossible. I am not a bad woman at heart. It is not cowardice and gluttony that have

made me what I am. If I drink brandy, it is through wretchedness. I do not like it, but it dulls my senses. In happier times you need only have looked into my chest of drawers, and you would have seen that I was not a disorderly woman; for I had linen,—plenty of linen. Take pity on me, M. Javert."

She spoke thus, rent in twain, shaken by sobs, blinded by tears, her neck bare, wringing her hands, interrupted by a sharp, dry cough, and stammering softly, with death imprinted on her voice. Great sorrow is a divine and terrible ray which transfigures the wretched, and at this moment Fantine became lovely again. From time to time she stopped, and tenderly kissed the skirt of the policeman's coat. She would have melted a heart of stone,—but a wooden heart cannot be melted.

"Well," said Javert, "I have listened to you. Have you said all? Be off now; you have six months. The Eternal Father in person could not alter it."

On hearing this solemn phrase, she understood that sentence was passed. She fell all of a heap, murmuring, "Mercy!" But Javert turned his back, and the soldiers seized her arm. Some minutes previously a man had entered unnoticed. He had closed the door, leaned against it, and heard Fantine's desperate entreaties. When the soldiers laid hold of the unhappy girl, who would not rise, he emerged from the shadow, and said:—

"Wait a minute, if you please."

Javert raised his eyes, and recognized M. Madeleine. He took off his hat, and bowed with a sort of vexed awkwardness.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Mayor —"

The words "Mr. Mayor" produced a strange effect on Fantine. She sprang up with a bound, like a spectre emerging from the ground, thrust back the soldiers, walked straight up to M. Madeleine before she could be prevented, and, looking at him wildly, she exclaimed:—

"So you are the mayor?"

Then she burst into a laugh, and spat in his face.

M. Madeleine wiped his face and said:—

“Inspector Javert, set this woman at liberty.”

Javert felt for a moment as if he were going mad. He experienced at this instant the most violent emotions he had ever felt in his life, following each other in rapid succession, and almost simultaneously. To see a girl of the town spit in the mayor's face was so monstrous a thing that in his wildest flights he would have regarded it as sacrilege even to believe it possible. On the other hand, in his innermost heart, he confusedly made a hideous approximation in his mind between what this woman was and what this mayor might be; and then he saw with horror something perfectly simple in this terrible assault. But when he saw this mayor, this magistrate, calmly wipe his face, and say, “Set this woman at liberty,” he felt dizzy with surprise. Thought and language failed him equally, for he had passed the limits of possible amazement. He was dumb. These words produced an equally strange effect on Fantine. She raised her bare arm and clung to the damper of the stove like a person who is falling. She looked around, and began in a low voice, as if speaking to herself:—

“At liberty! I am to be let go! I shall not be sent to prison for six months! Who said that? It is impossible that any one said it. I must have heard wrong. It cannot be that monster of a mayor. Was it you, my kind M. Javert, who said that I was to be set at liberty? Well, I will tell you all about it, and you will let me go. That monster of a mayor, that old villain of a mayor, is the cause of it all. Just imagine, M. Javert, he discharged me on account of a parcel of sluts gossiping in the shop. Was not that horrible, — to discharge a poor girl who was doing her work fairly well! After that I did not earn enough, and all this misfortune came. In the first place, there is one improvement which the gentlemen of the police ought to make, and that is to prevent contractors for prison labour from injuring poor people. I will explain this to you. You earn twelve sous for making a shirt; it falls to nine, and then you can no longer

live, and are obliged to do what you can. As I had my little Cosette, I was forced to become a bad woman. You can now understand how it was that beggar of a mayor who did all the mischief. I trampled on the gentleman's hat before the officers' club, but he had ruined my dress with snow; and our sort have only one silk dress for evening wear. Indeed, M. Javert, I never did any harm purposely, and I see everywhere much worse women than myself who are much more fortunate. Oh, Monsieur Javert, you said that I was to be set at liberty, did you not? Make inquiries, speak to my landlord. Now that I pay my rent they will tell you that I am honest. Oh, good gracious! I ask your pardon, but I have touched the damper of the stove without noticing it, and made it smoke."

M. Madeleine listened to her with deep attention. While she was talking, he fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, took out his purse and opened it. It was empty. He returned it to his pocket. He now said to Fantine:

"How much did you say that you owed?"

Fantine, who was looking at Javert, turned round to him:—

"Am I speaking to you?"

Then she said to the soldiers:—

"Tell me, men, did you see how I spat in his face? Ah, you old villain of a mayor, you came here to frighten me; but I am not afraid of you. I am afraid of Monsieur Javert; I am afraid of my kind Monsieur Javert."

So saying, she turned again to the inspector: "After all, Mr. Inspector, people should be just. I understand that you are a just man, M. Javert; in fact, it is quite simple. A man plays at putting snow down a woman's back, and that made the officers laugh. They must have some amusement, and we girls are sent into the world for them to make fun of. And then you came up. You are compelled to restore order, you remove the woman who was in the wrong; but, on reflection, as you are kind-hearted, you order me to be set at liberty. It is for the sake of my little girl; for six months' imprisonment would prevent my supporting her. But don't

do it again, you jade! Oh, I won't do it again, M. Javert. They can do what they like to me in future, and I will not stir; but I cried out to-night because it hurt me. I was not expecting that snow from that gentleman; and then, besides, as I told you, I am not well. I cough; I have something like a ball in my stomach, that burns, and the doctor says, 'Take care of yourself.' Here, feel; give me your hand; do not be frightened — right here."

She no longer cried; her voice was caressing. She laid Javert's large, coarse hand on her white, delicate throat, and looked up at him smilingly. All at once she hurriedly repaired the disorder in her clothes, dropped the folds of her dress, which, as she was dragged along, had been almost pushed up to her knee, and walked toward the door, saying to the soldiers with a friendly nod:—

"My lads, M. Javert says I may go, so I will be off."

She laid her hand on the latch. One step more, and she would be in the street. Up to this moment Javert had stood motionless, with his eyes fixed on the ground, appearing in the centre of this scene like a statue waiting to be put in its proper place. The sound of the latch aroused him. He raised his head with an expression of sovereign authority,—an expression the more frightful, the lower the man in power stands. It is ferocity in the wild beast, atrocity in a mere nobody.

"Sergeant," he shouted, "do you not see that the wench is bolting? Who told you to let her go?"

"I did," said M. Madeleine.

Fantine, at the sound of Javert's voice, trembled, and let go the latch, as a detected thief lets fall the stolen article. At M. Madeleine's voice she turned, and from this moment, without uttering a word, without even daring to breathe freely, her eyes wandered from Madeleine to Javert, and from Javert to Madeleine, according as each spoke. It was evident that Javert must have been "lifted off the hinge," as people say, when he ventured to address the sergeant as he had done, after the mayor's request that Fantine should be

set at liberty. Had he gone so far as to forget the mayor's presence? Did he finally declare to himself that it was impossible for "any authority" to give such an order, and that the mayor must certainly have said one thing for another, without meaning it? Or was it that, in the presence of all the enormities he had witnessed during the last two hours, he said to himself that he must have recourse to a supreme resolution, that the little must become great, the detective be transformed into the magistrate, and that, in this prodigious extremity, order, law, morality, government, and society were personified in him, Javert? However this may be, when M. Madeleine said, "I did," the inspector of police turned to the mayor, pale, cold, with blue lips, with desperate glance, and an imperceptible tremor all over him, and — extraordinary circumstance! — he said, with downcast eyes, but in a fierce voice:—

"Mr. Mayor, that cannot be."

"Why so?"

"This creature has insulted a gentleman."

"Inspector Javert," replied M. Madeleine, in a calm and conciliating tone, "listen to me. You are an honest man, and I shall have no difficulty in coming to an explanation with you. The truth is as follows: I was crossing the market-place at the time you were leading this girl away, a crowd was still assembled; I inquired, and know all. The man was in the wrong, and, in common justice, ought to have been arrested in her place."

Javert objected:—

"The wretched creature has just insulted you."

"That is my concern," said M. Madeleine; "my insult is my own, and I can do what I like with it."

"I ask your pardon, sir; the insult was not to you, but to justice."

"Inspector Javert," replied M. Madeleine, "conscience is the highest of all courts. I have heard the woman and know what I am doing."

"And I, Mr. Mayor, do not know what I see."

"In that case, be content with obeying."

"I obey my duty. My duty orders that this woman should go to prison for six months."

M. Madeleine answered gently:—

"Hear what I say. She will not go for a single day."

On hearing these decided words, Javert ventured to look steadily at the mayor, and to say, though still in a respectful tone:—

"I bitterly regret being compelled to resist you. Mr. Mayor, it is the first time in my life, but you will allow me to observe that I am within the limits of my authority. As you wish it, sir, I will confine myself to the affair with the gentleman. I was present. This girl attacked M. Bama-tabois, who is an elector and owner of that fine three-storied house, built of hewn stone, at the corner of the Esplanade. Well, there are things in this world. However this may be, Mr. Mayor, this is a matter for the street police and concerns me, and I intend to punish the woman Fantine."

M. Madeleine upon this folded his arms, and said in a stern voice, which no one in the town had ever heard before:—

"The affair to which you allude belongs to the municipal police; and by the terms of articles nine, eleven, fifteen, and sixty-six of the Criminal Code, I am the proper judge of it. I order this woman to be set at liberty."

Javert made a final effort.

"But, Mr. Mayor —"

"I call your attention to article eighty-one of the law of December 13, 1799, upon arbitrary detention."

"Permit me, sir —"

"Not a word!"

"But —"

"Leave the room!" said M. Madeleine.

Javert received the blow erect, full in the face, in his breast, like a Russian soldier. He bowed down to the ground before the mayor, and went out. Fantine stood aside from the door, and watched him pass by her in amazement. She, too, was suffering from a strange perturbation, for she had

seen herself, so to speak, contended for by two opposite powers. She had seen two men struggling in her presence, who held in their hands her liberty, her life, her soul, her child. One of these men dragged her toward the gloom, the other restored her to the light. In this struggle, which she gazed at through the exaggeration of terror, the two men seemed to her giants, —one spoke like a demon, the other like her good angel. The angel had vanquished the demon, and the thing which made her shudder from head to foot was that this angel, this liberator, was the very man whom she abhorred,— the mayor whom she had so long regarded as the cause of all her woes; at the very moment when she had insulted him in such a hideous way, he saved her. Could she be mistaken? Must she change her whole soul? She did not know, but she trembled. She listened wildly; she looked on with terror, and at every word that M. Madeleine uttered, she felt the darkness of hate melt and crumble in her heart, and something glowing and ineffable spring up in its place, which was composed of joy, confidence, and love. When Javert had left the room, M. Madeleine turned to her, and said slowly, like a serious man who is making an effort to restrain his tears:—

“I have heard your story. I knew nothing about what you have said, but I believe, I feel, that it is true. I was even ignorant that you had left my factory. Why did you not apply to me? But here, I will pay your debts and send for your child, or you can go to her. You can live here, in Paris, or wherever you please, and I will provide for your child and yourself. You shall not work any longer unless you choose. I will give you all the money you require, and you will become respectable again when you are happy. And, listen, I tell you now, if all be as you say, and I do not doubt it, you have never ceased to be virtuous and holy in the sight of God! Poor woman!”

This was more than poor Fantine could endure. To have her Cosette! To leave this infamous life! To live free, rich, happy, and respectable with Cosette! To see all these realities of paradise suddenly burst into flower, in the midst of

her wretchedness! She looked as if stunned, at this man who spoke to her, and could only sob two or three times, "Oh, oh, oh!" Her legs gave way; she fell on her knees before M. Madeleine, and, before he could prevent it, he felt her seize his hand and press her lips to it.

Then she fainted.

BOOK VI

JAVERT

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING OF REST

M. MADELEINE had Fantine conveyed to the infirmary which he had established in his own house, and intrusted her to the sisters, who put her to bed. A violent fever had broken out; she spent a part of the night in raving and talking aloud, but at length fell asleep. On the morrow, about midday, Fantine awoke, and, hearing some one breathing close to her bed, she drew the curtain aside, and saw M. Madeleine gazing at something above her head. His glance was full of pity, agony, and supplication; she followed its direction and saw that it was fixed on a crucifix nailed to the wall. M. Madeleine was henceforth transfigured in Fantine's eyes, and seemed to her surrounded by light. He was absorbed in a sort of prayer, and she looked at him for some time without daring to interrupt him, but at length she said, timidly:—

“What are you doing there?”

M. Madeleine had been standing on this spot for an hour, waiting till Fantine should wake. He took her hand, felt her pulse, and answered:—

“How are you?”

“Very comfortable. I have slept; I think I am better. It will be nothing.”

He continued, answering the question she had first asked him, and as if he had only just heard it:—

“I was praying to the martyr up there;” and he mentally added, “for the martyr down here.”

M. Madeleine had spent the night and the morning in making inquiries, and had learned everything; he knew all the poignant details of Fantine’s history. He continued:—

“You have suffered deeply, poor mother. Oh! do not complain, for you have now the dowry of the elect; it is in this way that human beings become angels. It is not their fault; they do not know how to manage otherwise. The hell you have now left is the anteroom to heaven, and you were obliged to begin with that.” He heaved a deep sigh, but she smiled upon him with the sublime smile in which two teeth were wanting.

Javert had written a letter during the past night, and posted it himself the next morning. It was for Paris, and the address was: “Monsieur Chabouillet, secretary to the chief of police.” As a rumour had been spread abroad about the affair in the police office, the post-mistress, and some other persons who saw the letter before it was sent off, and recognized Javert’s handwriting, supposed that he was sending in his resignation. M. Madeleine hastened to write to the Thénardiens. Fantine owed them over one hundred and twenty francs, and he sent them three hundred, bidding them pay themselves out of the amount, and bring the child at once to M——, where a sick mother awaited it. This dazzled Thénardier. “Hang it all,” he said to his wife, “we must not let the brat go, for the lark will become a milch cow for us. I see it all; some fool has fallen in love with the mother. He replied by sending a bill for five hundred and odd francs very well drawn up. In this bill two genuine accounts figured,—one from a physician, the other from an apothecary, who had attended Eponine and Azelma in a long illness. Cosette, as we said, had not been ill, and hence it was merely a trifling change of names. At the bottom of the

bill Thénardier gave credit for three hundred francs received on account. M. Madeleine at once sent three hundred francs more, and wrote, "Make haste and bring Cosette."

"Christi!" said Thénardier, "we must not let the child go."

In the mean while Fantine did not recover, and still remained in the infirmary. The sisters had at first received and nursed "that girl" with some repugnance. Any one who has seen the bas-relief at Rheims will remember the pouting lower lip of the wise virgins looking at the foolish virgins. This ancient contempt of Vestals for Ambubaïæ is one of the deepest instincts of feminine dignity; and the sisters felt it, with the increased dislike which religion adds. But in a few days Fantine disarmed them; she had all sorts of humble and gentle words, and the mother within her moved them to tenderness. One day the sisters heard her say in the paroxysm of fever, "I have been a sinner; but when I have my child by my side, that will show that God has forgiven me. While I was leading a bad life, I should not have liked to have Cosette with me, for I could not have endured her sad, astonished eyes; and yet it was for her sake that I did wrong, and so God pardons me. I shall feel the blessing of Heaven when Cosette is here; I shall look at her, and it will do me good to see the innocent creature. She knows nothing at all. She is an angel, you see, sisters. At her age the wings have not yet dropped off."

M. Madeleine went to see her twice a day, and every time she asked him, "Shall I see my Cosette soon?"

He would answer:—

"To-morrow, perhaps; she may come at any moment. I am expecting her."

And the mother's pale face would grow radiant.

"Oh!" she said, "how happy I shall be!"

We have said that she did not improve; on the contrary, her condition seemed to grow worse week by week. The handful of snow placed between her naked shoulder-blades produced a sudden cheek of perspiration, which caused the

illness that had smouldered in her for years to break out suddenly. Laënnec's fine method of studying and treating disease of the lungs was just beginning to be employed; the physician placed the stethoscope to Fantine's chest, and shook his head. M. Madeleine said to him:—

“Well?”

“Has she not a child that she wishes to see?” asked the doctor.

“Yes.”

“Well, make haste and send for her.”

Madeleine shuddered, and Fantine asked:—

“What did the doctor say?”

Madeleine forced a smile.

“He said that your child must come at once, for that would cure you.”

“Oh,” she replied, “he is right; what do those Thénardiens mean by keeping my Cosette? Oh, she will come and then I shall see happiness close to me.”

Thénardier, however, would not let the child go, and alleged a hundred poor excuses,—Cosette was ailing, and it would be dangerous for her to travel in winter, and then there were some small debts still to pay, which he was collecting, etc.

“I will send some one to fetch Cosette,” said Father Madeleine; “if necessary, I will go myself.”

He wrote at Fantine's dictation the following letter, which she signed:—

M. THÉNARDIER:—

You will hand over Cosette to the bearer, who will pay up all little matters.

Yours,

FANTINE.

About this time, a serious incident occurred. However cleverly we may carve the mysterious block of which our life is made, the black vein of destiny ever re-appears in it.

CHAPTER II

HOW "JEAN" MAY BECOME "CHAMP"

ONE morning M. Madeleine was in his study, engaged in settling some pressing official matters, in case he decided on the journey to Montfermeil, when he was told that Inspector Javert wished to speak with him. On hearing this name, Madeleine could not refrain from a disagreeable impression. Since the adventure of the police station, Javert had avoided him more than ever, and Madeleine had not seen him again.

"Show him in," he said.

Javert entered. Madeleine remained seated at his table near the fireplace, pen in hand, his eyes fixed on a bundle of papers, which he was turning over and annotating. He did not disturb himself for Javert, for he could not refrain from thinking of poor Fantine, and chose to be freezing in his reception. Javert bowed respectfully to the mayor, who had his back turned to him; the mayor did not look at him, but continued to make his notes. Javert walked a little way into the study, and then halted without a word. A physiognomist familiar with Javert's nature, and who had studied for any length of time this savage in the service of civilization,—this strange composite of the Roman, the Spartan, the monk, and the corporal, this spy incapable of falsehood, this spotless detective,—a physiognomist aware of his secret and ancient aversion for Madeleine and his conflict with him about Fantine, and who saw Javert at this moment, would have asked himself, What has happened? It was evident to any one who knew his upright, clear, sincere, honest, austere, and ferocious conscience, that Javert had just emerged from some great internal struggle. Javert had nothing in his mind which he did not also have in his face, and, like all violent men, he was subject to sudden change. Never had his face

been more peculiar or more surprising. On entering, he bowed to M. Madeleine with a look in which there was neither rancour, anger, nor suspicion; he halted a few yards behind the mayor's chair, and now stood there in an almost military attitude, with the simple cold hardness of a man who has never been gentle and has ever been patient. He waited, without a word, without a movement, in true humility and tranquil resignation, eyes downcast, till the mayor might think proper to turn round,—hat in hand, calm, serious, and with an expression half-way between that of a private before his officer and that of a culprit before his judge. All the feelings as well as all the memories he might be supposed to possess had disappeared; there was nothing but a gloomy sadness on his face, which was impenetrable and simple as granite. His whole person displayed humiliation and firmness, and a sort of courageous despondency. At length the mayor laid down his pen and half turned.

“Well, what is it? What is the matter, Javert?”

Javert was silent for a moment, as if reflecting, and then raised his voice with a sad solemnity, which, however, did not exclude simplicity.

“A culpable deed has been committed, sir.”

“What deed?”

“An inferior agent of authority has failed in respect to a magistrate, and in the gravest manner. I have come, as is my duty, to bring the fact to your knowledge.”

“Who is this agent?” asked M. Madeleine.

“Myself.”

“And who is the magistrate who has cause to complain of the agent?”

“You, Mr. Mayor.”

M. Madeleine sat up in his chair, and Javert continued, with a stern air and still looking down:—

“Mr. Mayor, I have come to ask you to procure my dismissal from the service.”

Madeleine in his stupefaction opened his lips, but Javert interrupted him:—

"You may say that I could have sent in my resignation, but that is not enough. Such a course is honourable; but I have done wrong, and deserve punishment. I must be dismissed."

And after a pause he added:—

"Mr. Mayor, you were unjustly severe to me the other day, be so to-day justly."

"What is the meaning of all this nonsense?" exclaimed M. Madeleine. "What is the culpable act you have committed? What have you done to me? You accuse yourself; you wish to be removed —"

"Dismissed," said Javert.

"Very good, dismissed. I do not understand."

"You shall do so, sir."

Javert heaved a deep sigh and continued, still coldly and sadly:—

"Six weeks ago, Mr. Mayor, after the scene about that girl, I was furious, and denounced you."

"Denounced me?"

"To the chief of police at Paris."

M. Madeleine, who did not laugh much oftener than Javert, burst into a laugh.

"As a mayor who had encroached on the province of the police?"

"As an ex-galley-slave."

The mayor turned livid, but Javert, who had not raised his eyes, continued:—

"I thought it was so, and have had these notions for a long time. A resemblance, information which you sought at Faverolles, the strength of your loins, the adventure with old Fauchelevent, your skill with fire-arms, your leg which halts a little,— and so on. It was very absurd, but I took you for a man of the name of Jean Valjean."

"What name did you say?"

"Jean Valjean; he is a convict I saw twenty years ago when I was assistant keeper at the galleys of Toulon. On leaving the galleys, this Valjean, as it appears, robbed a

bishop, and then committed highway robbery on a little Savoyard. For eight years he has been out of the way and could not be found, and I imagined — In a word, I did as I said. Passion decided me, and I denounced you to the chief.”

M. Madeleine, who had taken up his papers again, said in a careless tone:—

“And what was the answer you received?”

“That I was mad!”

“Well?”

“They were right.”

“It is fortunate that you admit it.”

“I must do so, for the real Jean Valjean has been found.”

The papers M. Madeleine was holding fell from his grasp; he raised his head, looked searchingly at Javert, and said with an indescribable accent:—

“Oh!”

Javert continued:—

“This is how it is, Mr. Mayor. It seems that there was, over at Ailly le Haut Clocher, an old fellow called Father Champmathieu. He was very wretched, and no attention was paid to him, for no one knows how such people live. This autumn Father Champmathieu was arrested for stealing cider apples from — well, no matter whom; there was a robbery, a wall climbed over, and branches broken. This Champmathieu was arrested with the branch still in his hand, and was locked up. Up to this point it is only a matter for a police court; but here Providence interposes. As the lock-up was under repair, the magistrates ordered that Champmathieu should be taken to the departmental prison at Arras. In this prison there is an ex-convict of the name of Brevet, under imprisonment for some offence, and he has been made underturnkey for his good behaviour. Champmathieu no sooner arrived than Brevet cries out, ‘Why, I know this man; he is an ex-convict. Look at me, old fellow; you are Jean Valjean.’ ‘Jean Valjean! What do you mean?’ says Champmathieu, affecting surprise. ‘Don’t play the “flat” with

me,' says Brevet; 'you are Jean Valjean. You were at the Toulon galleys twenty years ago, and I was there too.' Champmathieu denied identity; and, as you may suppose, the affair was thoroughly investigated, with the following result. This Champmathieu about thirty years ago was a pruner of trees at several places, especially at Faverolles, where his trail is lost. A long time after he is found again in Auvergne, and then in Paris, where he says he was a wheelwright, and had a daughter a washerwoman,—though there is no evidence of this; and lastly he turned up in these parts. Now, before being sent to the galleys, what was Jean Valjean? A pruner; where? At Faverolles. And here is another fact: this Valjean's Christian name was Jean, and his mother's family name Mathieu. What is more natural to suppose than that on leaving the galleys he assumed his mother's name as a disguise, and called himself Jean Mathieu? He went to Auvergne, where Jean is pronounced Chan, and thus he was transformed into Champmathieu. You follow me, I suppose? Inquiries have been made at Faverolles, but Jean Valjean's family is no longer there, and no one knows where they have gone. As you are aware, in those places families frequently disappear; these people, if they are not mud, are dust. And then, again, as the beginning of this story dates back thirty years, there is no one left in Faverolles who knew Jean Valjean; and besides Brevet, there are only two convicts who remember him,—two prisoners for life. These two were brought from the galleys and confronted with the pretended Champmathieu, and they did not hesitate for a moment. The same age,—fifty-four; the same height, the same look, the same man, in short. It was at this very moment that I sent my denunciation to Paris, and the answer I received was that I had lost my senses, for Jean Valjean was in the hands of justice at Arras. You can conceive that this surprised me, as I fancied that I had that same Jean Valjean here. I wrote to the magistrates, who sent for me, and Champmathieu was brought in."

"Well?" interrupted M. Madeleine.

Javert answered with his incorruptible and sad face.

"Mr. Mayor, truth is truth. I am sorry, but that man is Jean Valjean; I recognized him too."

M. Madeleine said in a very low voice:—

"Are you sure?"

Javert burst into that melancholy laugh which comes from profound conviction:—

"Oh, certain."

He stood for a moment pensive, mechanically taking pinches of blotting-sand out of the sprinkler on the table, and added:—

"And now that I have seen the real Jean Valjean, I cannot understand how I could have believed anything else. I ask your pardon, Mr. Mayor."

As he addressed these supplicating words to the person who six weeks previously had humiliated him so deeply and bidden him leave the room, the haughty man was unconsciously full of dignity and simplicity. M. Madeleine merely answered his entreaty by the hurried question:—

"And what does this man say?"

"Well, Mr. Mayor, it is an ugly business, for if he is Jean Valjean, he is an escaped convict. Scaling a wall, breaking a branch, and stealing apples is a peccadillo in a child, an offence in a man, but a crime in a convict. That is robbing and entering. It is no longer a matter for the police courts, but for the assizes; it is no longer imprisonment for a few days, but the galleys for life. And there is the matter with the little Savoyard, which I trust, will be brought up again. The devil! There is enough to settle a man, is there not? Yes, for any one but Jean Valjean. But Jean Valjean is artful; and that's where I recognized him too. Any other man would feel that things were getting hot; he would struggle, cry out, refuse to be Jean Valjean, and so on. He pretends, though, not to understand, and says, 'I am Champ-mathieu, and I shall stick to it.' He looks amazed, and plays stupid, which is far better. Oh, he is a clever scoundrel! But no matter, the proofs are ready to hand; he has been

recognized by four persons, and the old scamp will be found guilty. He is to be tried at Arras assizes, and I have been summoned as a witness."

M. Madeleine had turned to his desk again, taken up his papers, and was quietly turning over the leaves, busily reading and writing by turns. He now said to the inspector:—

"Enough, Javert; after all, these details interest me but very slightly. We are losing our time, and have a deal of work before us. Javert, you will go at once to Mother Buseaupied, who sells vegetables at the corner of the Rue Saint Saulve, and tell her to take out a summons against Pierre Chesnelong the carter; he is a brutal fellow, who almost drove over this woman and her child, and he must be punished. You will then go to M. Charcellay in the Rue Champigny; he complains that there is a gutter next door which leaks, and is sapping the foundation of his house. After that, you will verify the breaches of police regulations reported to me in the Rue Ginborg, at Widow Doris's house, and at Madame Renée le Bosse's place in the Rue Garrand Blanc; and you may make out the papers. But I am giving you a deal to do, and I think you said you were going away. Did you not say you were going to Arras on this matter in a week or ten days?"

"Sooner than that, sir."

"On what day, then?"

"I fancied I told you that the trial comes off to-morrow, and that I should start by to-night's coach." M. Madeleine started slightly.

"And how long will the trial last?"

"A day at the most, and sentence will be passed to-morrow night at the latest. But I shall not wait for the sentence, which is certain, but return as soon as I have given my evidence."

"Very good," said M. Madeleine, and he dismissed Javert with a wave of his hand; but Javert did not go.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Mayor," said he.

"What's the matter now?" asked M. Madeleine.

"I have one thing to remind you of sir."

"What is it?"

"That I must be discharged."

M. Madeleine rose.

"Javert, you are a man of honour, and I esteem you; you exaggerate your fault; and besides, this also is an offence which concerns me only. You deserve to rise, not to be degraded; and I insist on your keeping your situation."

Javert looked at M. Madeleine with his clear eyes, in whose depths his unenlightened but pure and rigid conscience seemed visible, and said quietly:—

"Mr. Mayor, I cannot agree to that."

"I repeat," replied M. Madeleine, "that the affair concerns myself alone."

But Javert, attending to his own thoughts only, continued:—

"As for exaggerating, I am not doing so; for this is how I reason. I suspected you unjustly. That is nothing; it is the duty of men like myself to suspect, though there is an abuse in suspecting those above us. But without proofs, in a moment of passion, and for the purpose of revenge, I denounced you, a respectable man, a mayor and a magistrate. This is serious, very serious; I, an agent of the authorities, insulted that authority in your person. Had any of my subordinates done what I have done, I should have declared him unworthy of his position, and discharged him. Stay, Mr. Mayor, one word more: I have often been severe in my life to others, for it was just, and I was doing my duty; and if I were not severe to myself now, all the justice I have done would become injustice. Ought I to spare myself more than others? No. What! am I only fit to punish others and not myself? Why, I should be a scoundrel, and the people who call me 'that rogue of a Javert' would be in the right! Mr. Mayor, I do not wish you to treat me kindly, for your kindness causes me sufficient ill-blood when dealt to others, and I want none for myself. The kindness that decides in favour of a street-walker against a gentleman, of a police

agent against the mayor, of the lower classes against the higher, is what I call mistaken kindness; and it is such kindness that disorganizes society. Good Lord! it is easy enough to be kind, but the difficulty is to be just. Come! if you had been what I believed you, I should not have been kind to you, as you would have seen. Mr. Mayor, I am bound to treat myself as I would treat another man; when I repressed malefactors, when I was severe with scamps, I often said to myself, 'If you ever catch yourself tripping, look out!' I have tripped, I have committed a fault, and so much the worse for me. I have strong arms and will turn labourer,—it's all one to me. Mr. Mayor, the good of the service requires an example. I simply demand the discharge of Inspector Javert."

All this was spoken in an humble, proud, despairing, and convinced tone, which lent peculiar grandeur to this strangely honest man.

"We will see," said M. Madeleine, and he offered him his hand; but Javert fell back, and said sternly:—

"Pardon me, sir, but that must not be; a mayor should not give his hand to a spy." He added between his teeth: "Yes, a spy; from the moment that I misused my authority, I became only a spy."

Then he bowed low, and walked to the door. When he reached it he turned and said, with eyes still bent on the ground:—

"Mr. Mayor, I will continue on duty till my place is filled."

He went out. M. Madeleine thoughtfully listened to his firm, sure step as he walked along the paved passage.

BOOK VII

THE CHAMPMATHIEU AFFAIR

CHAPTER I

SISTER SIMPLICITY

THE incidents we are about to record were only partially known at M——, but the few which were known, left such a memory in that town that it would be a serious gap in this book if we did not repeat them in their smallest details. In these details the reader will notice two or three improbable circumstances, which we retain through respect for truth. On the afternoon following Javert's visit, M. Madeleine went to see Fantine as usual; but before going to her, he asked for Sister Simplicity. The two nuns who managed the infirmary, who were Lazarists, like all sisters of charity, were known by the names of Sisters Perpetua and Simplicity. Sister Perpetua was an ordinary village girl, a clumsy sister of charity, who had entered the service of Heaven just as she would have taken a cook's place. This type is not rare, for the monastic orders gladly accept this rude peasant clay, which can be easily moulded into a Capuchin friar or an Ursuline nun; and these rustics are employed in the heavy work of devotion. The transition from a drover to a Carmelite is no hard task. The common substratum of village and cloister ignorance is a ready-made preparation, and at once places the countryman on a level with the monk. Widen the blouse a little and you have a gown. Sister Perpetua was a

healthy, hearty nun belonging to Marines, near Pontoise, who talked with a country twang, sang psalms, scolded, sugared the potion according to the bigotry or hypocrisy of the patient, was rough with the sick, and harsh with the dying, almost throwing God in their faces, and stoning their last moments with angry prayer. Withal she was bold, honest, and red-faced.

Sister Simplicity was pale, and looked like a wax taper by the side of Sister Perpetua, who was a tallow candle in comparison. Vincent de Paul has divinely described the sister of charity in these admirable words which combine so much liberty and slavery: "She will have no other convent but the hospital, no other cell but a hired room, no chapel but the parish church, no cloister beyond the streets or the hospital wards, no walls but obedience, no grating but the fear of God, and no veil but modesty." Sister Simplicity was the living ideal of this picture. No one could have told her age, for she had never been young and seemed as if she would never grow old. She was a gentle, austere, well-bred, cold person,—we dare not say a woman,—who had never told a falsehood. She was so gentle that she appeared fragile, but she was more solid than granite. She touched the wretched with delightfully delicate and pure fingers. There was, so to speak, silence in her speech. She only said what was necessary, and possessed an intonation of voice which would have at once have edified a confessional and charmed a drawing-room. This delicacy harmonized with the rough gown, finding in this harsh contact a continual reminder of heaven. Let us dwell on one detail,—never to have told a falsehood, never to have said, for any advantage, or even indifferently, a thing which was not the truth, the holy truth, was the characteristic feature of Sister Simplicity. It was the special mark of her virtue. She was almost celebrated in the congregation for this imperturbable veracity; and the Abbé Suard alludes to Sister Simplicity in a letter to the deaf-mute Massieu. However sincere and pure we may be, we have all the brand of some little white lie on our candour; but

she had not. Can there be such a thing as a white lie, an innocent lie? Lying is absolute evil. To lie a little is not possible. The man who lies tells the whole lie. Lying is the face of the fiend; and Satan has two names,—Satan and the Father of Lies. That is what she thought, and she practised as she thought. The result was the whiteness to which we have alluded, a whiteness which even covered with its radiance her lips and eyes; for her smile was white, her glance was white. There was not a spider's web nor a grain of dust on the window of her conscience. On entering the order of St. Vincent de Paul she took the name of Simplicity from special choice. Simplicity of Sicily, our readers will remember, is the saint who sooner let her two breasts be torn off than say she was a native of Segesta, when she was born at Syracuse, though the falsehood would have saved her. Such a patron saint suited this soul.

Simplicity, on entering the order, had two faults, of which she gradually corrected herself,—she had a taste for dainties and was fond of receiving letters. Now, she never read anything but a prayer-book in large type and in Latin. Though she did not understand the language, she understood the book. This pious woman felt an affection for Fantine, as she probably noticed the latent virtue in her, and devoted herself almost wholly to nursing her. M. Madeleine took Sister Simplicity aside and recommended Fantine to her with a singular accent, which the sister remembered afterward. On leaving the sister he went to Fantine. The patient daily awaited the appearance of M. Madeleine, as if he brought her warmth and light. She said to the sisters, "I only live when the mayor is here." This day she was very feverish, and so soon as she saw M. Madeleine she asked him,—

"Where is Cosette?"

He replied with a smile, "she will be here soon."

M. Madeleine was just as usual, except that he remained with her an hour instead of a half an hour, to her great delight. He begged everybody over and over not to allow the patient to want for anything; and it was noticed at one

moment that his face became very dark, but this was explained when it was learned that the physician had bent down to his ear and said, "She is sinking rapidly." Then he returned to his office, and the clerk saw him attentively examine a road-map of France, which hung in his room, after which he wrote a few figures in pencil on a piece of paper.

CHAPTER II

MASTER SCAUFFLAIRE'S PERSPICACITY

FROM his office, M. Madeleine proceeded to the end of the town, to a Fleming called Master Scaufflaer, gallicized into Scaufflaire, who let out horses and gigs by the day. The nearest way to his yard lay through an unfrequented street, in which stood the house of the parish priest. The priest was said to be a worthy and respectable man, who gave good advice. When M. Madeleine came in front of his house, there was only one person in the street, and he noticed the following circumstances: The mayor, after passing the house, stopped a moment, then turned back and walked up to the priest's door, which had an iron knocker. He quickly seized the knocker and lifted it. Then he stopped again, as if in deep thought, and after a few seconds, instead of knocking, he softly let the knocker fall back into its place and went on with a sort of haste which he had not previously displayed. M. Madeleine found Master Scaufflaire at home and engaged in mending a set of harness.

"Master Scaufflaire," he asked, "have you a good horse?"

"Mr. Mayor," replied the Fleming, "all my horses are good. What do you mean by a good horse?"

"I mean a horse that can cover twenty leagues of ground in a day."

"The devil!" said the Fleming: "twenty leagues?"

"Yes."

"Harnessed in a gig?"

"Yes."

"And how long will he rest after the journey?"

"He must be in condition to start again the next morning if necessary."

"To go the same distance back?"

"Yes."

"Hang it all! and it is twenty leagues?"

M. Madeleine took from his pocket the paper on which he had pencilled some figures. They were 5, 6, 8½.

"You see," he said, "total, nineteen and a half, or call them twenty leagues."

"Mr. Mayor," continued the Fleming, "I can suit you. My little white horse,—you may have seen him pass,—is an animal from Lower Boulonnais, and full of fire. They tried at first to make a saddle-horse of him; but he reared and kicked, and threw everybody that got on his back. He was supposed to be vicious, and no one knew what to do with him. I bought him, and put him in a gig. That was just what he wanted. He is as gentle as a maid and goes like the wind.

"But you must not try to get on his back, for he has no notion of being a saddle-horse. Everybody has his ambition, and it appears as if the horse had said to himself, 'Draw, yes; carry, no.'"

"And he will go the distance?"

"At a trot, and under eight hours, but on certain conditions."

"What are they?"

"In the first place, you will let him breathe for an hour half-way. He will feed, and you must be present while he does so, to prevent the hostler stealing the oats; for I have noticed that at inns oats are more frequently drunk by the stable-boys than eaten by the horses."

"I will be there."

"In the next place, is the gig for yourself, sir?"

"Yes."

"Do you know how to drive?"

"Yes."

"Well, you must travel alone and without luggage, in order not to overweight the horse."

"Agreed."

"But if you are alone, you will have to look out yourself that the oats are not stolen."

"Of course."

"I shall expect thirty francs a day, and the days of rest paid for as well. Not a farthing less; and you will pay for the horse's keep."

M. Madeleine took three napoleons from his purse and laid them on the table:—

"There are two days in advance."

"In the fourth place, a cabriolet would be too heavy for such a journey and would tire the horse. You must oblige me by travelling in a little tilbury I have."

"I consent."

"It is light, but it is open."

"I do not care."

"Have you thought, sir, that it is now winter?"

M. Madeleine made no answer, and the Fleming continued:—

"That it is very cold?"

M. Madeleine was still silent.

"That it may rain?"

The mayor raised his head and said:—

"The tilbury and the horse will be before my door at half-past four to-morrow morning."

"Very good, sir," answered Scaufflaire. Then, scratching with his thumb-nail a stain in the wood of his table, he continued, with that careless air with which the Flemings so cleverly conceal their craft:—

"Good gracious, I did not think to ask where you are going. Be kind enough to tell me, sir."

He had thought of nothing else since the beginning of the

conversation, but somehow he had not dared to ask the question.

"Has your horse good legs?" said M. Madeleine.

"Yes, Mr. Mayor. You will have to hold him up a little in going down-hill. Are there many hills between here and the place where you are going?"

"Do not forget to be at my door at half-past four exactly," M. Madeleine answered, and went away.

The Fleming stood "like a fool," as he himself said, a little while after. The mayor had been gone some two or three minutes when the door again opened. It was the mayor. He still wore the same impassive and preoccupied air.

"Scaufflaire," he said, "at how much do you value the tilbury and horse you are going to let me, one with the other?"

"Do you wish to buy them, sir?"

"No, but I should like to guarantee you against any accident, and when I come back you can return me the amount. What is your estimate of their value?"

"Five hundred francs, Mr. Mayor."

"Here they are."

M. Madeleine laid a bank-note on the table, then went out; and this time did not come back. Master Scaufflaire regretted frightfully that he had not said a thousand francs, though tilbury and horse, at a fair valuation, were worth just three hundred. The Fleming called his wife and told her what had occurred. "Where the deuce can the mayor be going?" They held a council. "He is going to Paris," said the wife. "I don't believe it," said the husband. M. Madeleine had left on the table the paper on which he had written the figures. The Fleming took it up and examined it. "Five, six, eight and a half. Why, that must mean post stations." He turned to his wife: "I have found it out." "How?" "It is five leagues from here to Hesdin, six from there to St. Pol, and eight and a half from St. Pol to Arras. He is going to Arras."

In the meanwhile the mayor had returned home, and had

taken the longest road, as if the door of the priest's house were a temptation which he wished to avoid. He went up to his bedroom and locked himself in, which was not unusual, for he was fond of going to bed at an early hour. Still, the factory portress, who was at the same time M. Madeleine's only servant, remarked that his candle was extinguished at half-past eight, and mentioned the fact to the cashier when he came in, adding:—

“Can master be ill? I thought he looked very strange to-day.” The cashier occupied a room directly under M. Madeleine. He paid no attention to the remarks of the portress, but went to bed and fell asleep. About midnight he woke with a start, for he heard in his sleep a noise above his head. He listened. It was a footfall coming and going, as if some one were walking about the room above him. He listened more attentively, and recognized M. Madeleine's step; and this seemed to him strange, for usually no sound could be heard from the mayor's room till he rose in the morning. A moment later the cashier heard a noise as if a wardrobe were opened and shut. A piece of furniture was moved, there was a pause, and the walking began again. The cashier sat up in bed, broad awake, looked out, and through his window noticed on a wall opposite the red reflection of a lighted window. From the direction of the rays it could only be the window of M. Madeleine's bedroom. The reflection flickered as if it came from a fire rather than a candle, while the shadow of the window-frame could not be traced, which proved that the window was wide open; and this was curious, as it was very cold. The cashier fell asleep, and woke again some two hours after. The same slow regular footfall was still audible above his head. The reflection was still cast on the wall, but was now pale and quiet, as if it came from a lamp or a candle. The window was still open. This is what occurred in M. Madeleine's bedroom.

CHAPTER III

A TEMPEST IN A BRAIN

THE reader has, of course, guessed that M. Madeleine is Jean Valjean. We have already looked into the depths of his conscience, and the moment has come to look into them again. We do this not without emotion or tremor, for there is nothing more terrifying than this sort of contemplation. The eye of the mind can nowhere find greater brilliancy or greater darkness than within man. It cannot dwell on anything which is more formidable, complicated, mysterious, or infinite. There is a spectacle grander than the ocean, and that is the sky. There is a spectacle grander than the sky, and it is the interior of the soul. To write the poem of the human conscience, were the subject only one man, and he the lowest of men, would be to reduce all epic poems to one supreme and final epic. Conscience is the chaos of chimeras, desires, and temptations, the furnace of dreams, the lurking-place of ideas of which we are ashamed. It is the pandemonium of sophistry, the battle-field of the passions. At certain hours, look through the livid face of a man deep in thought, look into his soul, peer into the darkness. Beneath the external silence, combats of giants are going on, such as we read of in Homer. Battles between dragons and hydras and clouds of phantoms, such as we find in Milton; and visionary circles, as in Dante. An awful thing is the infinitude which every man bears within him, and by which he despairingly measures the caprices of his brain and the actions of his life. Dante one day came to an ill-omened gate, before which he hesitated. We have one before us, on the threshold of which we also hesitate, but we will enter.

We have but little to add to what the reader already knows as having happened to Jean Valjean since his adventure with Little Gervais. From that moment, as we have seen, he be-

came another man, and he made himself what the bishop wished to make him. It was more than a transformation; it was a transfiguration. He succeeded in disappearing, sold the bishop's plate, only keeping the candlesticks as a memento, passed through France, reached M——, had the idea we have described, accomplished what we have narrated, managed to make himself safe from seizure and inaccessible, and henceforth settled at M——, happy at feeling his conscience saddened by the past, and the first half of his existence contradicted by the last half. He lived peacefully, reassured and confident, and having but two thoughts,—to hide his name and sanctify his life; escape from men and return to God.

These two thoughts were so closely blended in his mind that they formed but one. They were equally absorbing and imperious, and governed his slightest actions. Usually they agreed to regulate the conduct of his life. They turned him to the shadow. They rendered him beneficent and simple, and they counselled him to the same things. At times, however, there was a conflict between them; and in such cases the man whom the whole town of M—— called Monsieur Madeleine did not hesitate to sacrifice the first for the second,—his security to his virtue. Hence, despite all his caution and prudence, he had kept the bishop's candle-sticks, worn mourning for him, questioned all the little Savoyards who passed through the town, inquired after the family at Faverolles, and saved the life of old Fauchelevent, in spite of the alarming insinuations of Javert. It seemed, as we have already remarked, that he thought, after the example of all those who have been wise, holy, and just, that his first duty was not toward himself.

Still, we are bound to say, nothing like the present had before occurred. Never had the two ideas which governed the unhappy man whose sufferings we are describing, entered upon so serious a struggle. He understood this confusedly, but deeply, from the first words which Javert uttered on entering his study. When the name which he had buried so deeply was so strangely pronounced, he was struck with

stupor, and, as it were, intoxicated by the sinister peculiarity of his destiny. And through this stupor he felt that quiver which precedes great shocks. He bowed like an oak at the approach of a storm, like a soldier before a coming assault. He felt clouds charged with thunder and lightning gather over his head. As he listened to Javert his first thought was to go forth, to run and denounce himself, to take Champmathieu out of prison, and take his place. This was sharp and painful, like an incision in the flesh, but it passed away, and he said to himself, "We will see!" He repressed this first generous impulse, and shrank from such heroism.

It would doubtless have been grand if, after the bishop's holy words, after so many years of repentance and self-denial, in the midst of a penitence so admirably begun, this man, even in the presence of such a terrible juncture, had not failed for a moment, but continued to advance at the same pace toward this open abyss, at the bottom of which lay heaven. This would have been grand, but it did not take place. We are bound to describe all that took place in his mind, and we can only tell what was there. He was carried away at first by the instinct of self-preservation. He hastily collected his ideas, stifled his emotion, took into consideration Javert's presence, that great danger, postponed any resolution with the firmness of terror, ceased to think of what he had to do, and resumed his calmness as a gladiator picks up his buckler.

For the remainder of the day, he was in the same state,—a hurricane within, a deep tranquillity outside,—and he only took what may be called "preservative measures." All was still confused and jumbled in his brain. His trouble was so great that he did not see distinctly the outline of any idea; and he could have said nothing about himself, save that he had received a heavy blow. He went as usual to Fantine's bed of pain, and prolonged his visit, with a kindly instinct, saying to himself that he must act thus, and recommended her to the sisters in the event of his being obliged to go away. He vaguely felt that he must perhaps go to Arras; and,

though not the least in the world decided about the journey, he said to himself that, safe from suspicion as he was, there would be no harm in witnessing what might take place; and he hired Scaufflaire's tilbury, in order to be ready for any event.

He dined with considerable appetite, and on returning to his bedroom, reflected. He examined his situation, and found it unprecedented — so unprecedented that, in the midst of his revery, from some almost inexplicable impulse of anxiety, he rose from his chair and bolted his door. He was afraid lest something might enter, and he barricaded himself against the possible. A moment after, he blew out his light, for it annoyed him, and he fancied that he might be overseen. By whom? Alas! what he wanted to keep out had entered. What he wished to blind was looking at him. It was his conscience,—that is to say, God. Still, at first, he deceived himself. He had a feeling of security and solitude. When he pushed the bolt, he thought himself impregnable. When the candle was out, he felt himself invisible. He then regained his self-possession, and he put his elbows on the table, leaned his head on his hand, and began to dream in the darkness.

“Where am I? Am I not dreaming? What was I told? Is it really true that I saw Javert, and that he spoke those words? Who can this Champmathieu be? It seems he looks like me. Is it possible? When I think that I was so tranquil yesterday, and so far from suspecting anything! What was I doing yesterday at this hour? What is there in this event? What will be the result of this? What am I to do?”

Such was the trouble he was in that his brain had not the strength to retain ideas. They passed like waves, and he clutched his forehead with both hands to stop them. From this tumult which overthrew alike his will and his reason, and from which he sought to draw evidence and resolution, nothing issued but agony. His head was burning; and he went to the window and threw it wide open. There were no stars

in the heavens; he went back to the table and sat down. The first hour passed away thus, but gradually vague features began to shape themselves and to become fixed in his thoughts; and he could observe with the precision of reality some details, if not the whole of the situation. He began by recognizing that, however critical and extraordinary his situation might be, he was utterly master of it, and his stupor only increased.

Independently of the stern and religious object he had proposed to himself in his actions, all that he had done up to this day was only a hole that he dug in which to bury his name. What he had always most feared in his hours of reflection, as in his sleepless nights, was ever to hear *that* name pronounced. He said to himself that this would be to him the end of everything; that on the day when that name reappeared it would cause his new life, and possibly the new soul within him, to fade away. He shuddered at the mere thought that this might happen. Assuredly, if any one had told him at such moments that the hour would come when this name would ring in his ears, when the hideous of Jean Valjean would suddenly emerge from the darkness and rise before him, when this terrible light, capable of dissipating the mystery with which he surrounded himself, would suddenly shine above his head, and that the name would no longer menace him; that the light would produce only a denser gloom; that this rent veil would increase the mystery; that the earthquake would strengthen his structure; that this prodigious incident would have no other result, if he thought proper, but to render his existence at once clearer and more impenetrable, and that from his meeting with the phantom of Jean Valjean, the good and worthy M. Madeleine would come forth more honoured, more peaceful, and more respected than ever,—if any one had told him this, he would have shaken his head and considered such remarks senseless. And yet this was exactly what had happened, and all these impossibilities were a fact, and Heaven had permitted all these wild dreams to become real.

His reverie continued to grow clearer, and each moment he realized his position better. It seemed to him that he had just waked from a dream, and that he was descending an incline in the middle of the night, shuddering and shrinking in vain from the brink of an abyss. He distinctly saw in the darkness an unknown man, a stranger, whom destiny mistook for him and thrust into the gulf in his place. In order that the gulf should close, either he or another must fall in. He had only to let things take their course. The light became complete. He confessed to himself that his place in the galleys was empty; that, whatever he might do, it still awaited him, that the robbery of Little Gervais led him back to it, that this vacant place would wait for him and attract him until he filled it, and that this was inevitable and fatal. And then he said to himself that he now had a substitute; that it seemed that a man of the name of Champmathieu had his ill-luck; and that, in future, being himself at the galleys in the person of this Champmathieu, and present in society under the name of Madeleine, he would have nothing more to fear, provided that he did not prevent justice from laying over the head of this Champmathieu the stone of infamy which, like the tombstone, falls once and is never raised again.

All this was so violent and so strange that he suddenly felt within him that indescribable emotion which no man experiences more than twice or thrice in his life,—a sort of convulsion of the conscience which stirs everything doubtful in the heart, which is composed of irony, joy, and despair, and might be called a burst of inward laughter. He abruptly relit his candle.

“Well, what am I afraid of?” he said to himself; “why should I have such thoughts? I am saved, and all is settled. There was only one open door through which my past could invade my life; and that door is now walled up forever. That Javert, who has so long annoyed me, whose terrible instinct seemed to have scented me out, and, by heavens! had scented me out, the frightful dog ever making

a point at me, is routed, engaged elsewhere, and absolutely thrown out! He is henceforth satisfied; he will leave me in peace, for he has found Jean Valjean! It is possible that he may wish to leave the town too. And all this has taken place without my interference; and so, what is there so unlucky about it all? Upon my word, any one who saw me would think that some accident had befallen me. After all, if some people are made unhappy, it is no fault of mine. Providence has done it all, and apparently decrees it. Have I the right to meddle with the arrangements of Providence? What do I want now? What am I going to interfere in? It does not concern me. What! I am not satisfied? Why! what else can I want? I have attained the goal to which I have aspired for so many years, the dream of my nights, the object of my prayers,—security. It is Heaven's will. I cannot run counter to Heaven's will. And why has Heaven decreed it? That I may continue what I have begun; that I may do good; that I may one day be a grand and encouraging example; that it may be said that there is, after all, a little happiness attaching to the penance I have undergone, to that virtue to which I have returned. I really cannot understand why I was so afraid just now to visit that worthy priest, to tell him all, as to a confessor, and to ask his advice; for this is certainly what he would have advised me. It is settled. I will let matters take their course, and leave the decision to Heaven."

He spoke thus in the depths of his conscience, leaning over what might be called his own abyss. He got up from his chair and walked about the room. "Come," he said, "I will think no more of it. I have made up my mind;" but he felt no joy. Quite the contrary. It is no more possible to prevent thought from recurring to an idea than the sea from returning to the shore. The sailor calls this the tide; the culprit calls it remorse. God upheaves the soul like the ocean. After a few moments, do what he might, he resumed the gloomy dialogue in which it was he who spoke and he who listened, saying what he wished to ignore, listening to

what he did not desire to hear, and yielding to that mysterious power which said to him "Think," as it said, two thousand years ago, to another condemned man, "Move on."

Before going further, and in order to be fully understood, let us dwell on one necessary observation. It is certain that men do talk to themselves; and there is no thinking being who has not realized the fact. We may even say that the Word is never a more magnificent mystery than when it moves in a man's innermost depths, from thought to conscience and back from conscience to thought. It is in this sense only that the words frequently employed in this chapter, "he said," "he exclaimed," must be understood. Men talk to themselves, speak to themselves, cry out within themselves, but the external silence is not interrupted. There is a grand tumult. Everything speaks within us, excepting the mouth. The realities of the soul, for all that they are not visible and palpable, are none the less realities. He asked himself where he stood, and cross-questioned himself about the resolution he had formed. He confessed to himself that all he had arranged in his mind was monstrous, and that leaving "God to act" was simply horrible. To allow this mistake of destiny and of men to be accomplished, not to prevent it, to lend himself to it by his silence, to do nothing, in short, was to do everything. It was the last stage of hypocritical odiousness; it was a low, cowardly, cunning, abject, hideous crime. For the first time in eight years this hapless man tasted the bitter savour of a bad thought and a bad action, and he spat it out in disgust.

He continued to cross-question himself. He asked himself what he meant by the words, "My object is attained." He allowed that his life had an object, but what was this object? To conceal his name; to deceive the police. Was it for so paltry a thing that he had done all that he had done? Had he not another object, which was the great and true one,—to save, not his person, but his soul; to become once again honest and good? To be a just man,—was it not that, above all, that only which he craved, and which the bishop

had commanded? To close the door on his past? But he was not closing it; great Heavens! he was opening it again by committing an infamous action. He was becoming a robber once more, and the most odious of robbers: he was robbing another man of his existence, his life, his peace, and his place in the sunshine. He was becoming an assassin; he was killing, morally killing, a wretched man. He was inflicting on him that frightful living death,—that death beneath the free heavens which is called the galleys. On the other hand, if he gave himself up, freed this man who was suffering from so grievous an error, resumed his name, became, from a sense of duty the convict Jean Valjean,—that would be really completing his resurrection, and eternally closing the hell from which he was emerging. To fall back into it in seeming, would be to leave it in reality. He must do this. He had done nothing unless he did this. His life would be useless; all his repentance thrown away. It was too late to say, “What’s the use?” He felt that the bishop was here, that he was the more present because he was dead, that the bishop was steadfastly looking at him, and that henceforth Madeleine the mayor, with all his virtues, would be an abomination to him, and Jean Valjean the convict admirable and pure in his sight. Men saw his mask, but the bishop saw his face. Men saw his life, but the bishop saw his conscience. He must consequently go to Arras, deliver the false Jean Valjean, and denounce the true one. Alas! this was the greatest of sacrifices, the most painful of victories, the final step; but he must take it. Frightful destiny his! He could not obtain sanctity in the sight of Heaven unless he returned to infamy in the sight of man.

“Well,” he said, “I will make up my mind to this; I will do my duty and save this man.”

He uttered these words aloud without noticing that he had raised his voice. He fetched his books, verified and put them in order. He threw into the fire a number of claims upon embarrassed tradesmen, and wrote a letter, which he addressed “To M. Lafitte, banker, Rue d’Artois, Paris.” He

then took from his desk a pocket-book, which contained a few bank-notes and the passport he had used that year when he went to the elections. Any one who had seen him while he was accomplishing these various acts, with which such grave meditation was mingled, would not have suspected what was taking place in him. At moments his lips moved; then he raised his head and looked at the wall, as if there were something there which he desired to clear up or to question.

When the letter to Lafitte was finished, he put it into his portfolio, and began his walk once more. His reverie had not swerved from its course. He still saw his duty clearly written in luminous letters which flashed before his eyes and moved from place to place with his glance: "*Go! Tell your name! denounce yourself!*" He could also see, as though they moved before him in tangible form, the two ideas which had hitherto been the double rule of his life,—to hide his name and sanctify his life. For the first time they seemed to him absolutely distinct, and he saw the difference that separated them. He recognized that one of these ideas was necessarily good, while the other might become bad; that the former was devotion, the latter selfishness; that one said, "My neighbour," the other "Myself"; that one proceeded from the light and the other from darkness. They strove with each other, and he could see them contend. While he was thinking, they grew before his mental eye, and they had now colossal forms; and he fancied he could see a god and a giant wrestling within him, in the infinitude to which we just now alluded, and in the midst of darkness and light. It was a horrible sight, but it seemed to him as if the good thought gained the victory. He felt that he was approaching the second decisive moment of his life; that the bishop had marked the first phase of his new life, and that this Champmathieu marked the second. After the great crisis came the great trial.

The fever, appeased for a moment, gradually returned, however. A thousand thoughts crossed his mind, but they continued to strengthen him in his resolution. At one mo-

ment he said to himself that perhaps he regarded the matter too seriously; that, after all, this Champmathieu did not concern him, and in any case was a thief. He answered himself: "If this man has really stolen apples, he should have a month's imprisonment, but that is a long way from the galleys. And then, again, is it proved that he committed a robbery? The name of Jean Valjean is crushing him, and seems to dispense with proofs. Does not the attorney for the crown always act in this way? A man is believed to be a thief because he is known to be a convict." At another moment the idea occurred to him that when he had denounced himself the heroism of his deed might perhaps be taken into consideration, as well as his honest life for the last seven years, and the good he had done the town, and that he would be pardoned. But this supposition soon vanished, and he smiled bitterly at the thought that the theft of forty sous from Gervais made him guilty of a second offence; that this affair would certainly be brought up, and according to the precise terms of the law would render him liable to be sentenced to the galleys for life.

He turned away from all illusions, detached himself more and more from earth, and sought consolation and strength elsewhere. He said to himself that he must do his duty; that perhaps he would be no more wretched after doing it than he would have been had he evaded it; that if he *let matters take their course* and remained at M——, his good name, good deeds, the deference and respect paid to him, his charity, wealth, popularity, and virtue would be tainted by a crime; and what flavour would all these sacred things have when attached to this hideous thing; while, if he accomplished his sacrifice, he would mingle a heavenly idea with the galleys, the stake, the chain, the green cap, the unremitting toil, and the pitiless shame. At last he told himself that it was a necessity, that his destiny was thus shaped, that he had no power to change the decrees of Heaven, and that in any case, he must choose either outward virtue and inward abomination, or holiness within and infamy without. His courage

did not fail him in revolving so many mournful ideas, but his brain grew weary. He involuntarily began to think of other and indifferent matters. The veins in his temples throbbed, and he still walked up and down; midnight struck, first from the parish church, and then from the Town Hall. He counted the twelve strokes of the two clocks, and compared the sound of the two bells. He remembered, in this connection, that, a few days before, he had seen an old bell at a junkshop, on which was engraved the name, Antoine Albin, Romainville.

As he felt cold, he lit a fire, but never thought of closing the window. Then he fell back into his stupor, and was obliged to make a mighty effort to remember what he had been thinking of before midnight struck. At last he succeeded.

"Ah, yes," he said to himself, "I had resolved to denounce myself."

And then he suddenly began to think of Fantine.

"Stay," he said, "and that poor woman!"

Here a fresh crisis broke out. Fantine, suddenly appearing in the midst of his reverie, was like a ray of unexpected light. He fancied that all around him changed, and he exclaimed:—

"Wait a minute! Hitherto I have thought of myself only, and consulted only my own convenience. Whether it suits me to be silent or denounce myself, to hide myself or to save my soul, to be a contemptible and respected magistrate, or an infamous and venerable convict, it is always self, nought but self. Good heavens! all this is egotism,—under different shapes, 'tis true, but still egotism. Suppose I were to think a little about others! It is the first duty of a Christian to think of his neighbour. Well, let me consider. Leaving myself out of the question, what will come of all this? If I denounce myself, I shall be arrested. That Champmathieu will be set at liberty. I shall be sent back to the galleys, and that is well; what then? What will occur here? Here are a town, factories, a trade, work-people, men,

women, old grandfathers, children, and poor people. I have created all this. I keep them all alive. Wherever there is a smoking-chimney, I placed the brand in the fire, and the meat in the pot. I produced easy circumstances, circulation, and credit. Before I came there was nothing of all this. I revived, animated, fertilized, stimulated, and enriched the whole district. When I am gone the soul will be gone. If I withdraw, all will die; and then, this woman, who has suffered so greatly, who has so much merit in spite of her fall, and whose misfortune I unwittingly caused,—and the child which I intended to go and fetch and restore to the mother. Do not I also owe something to this woman, in reparation of the wrong which I have done her? If I disappear, what will happen? The mother will die, and the child will become what it can. This will happen if I denounce myself. If I do not denounce myself? Come, let me see.”

After asking himself the question, he hesitated, and trembled slightly, but this emotion lasted but a short time, and he answered himself calmly:—

“Well, this man will go to the galleys, it is true; but, hang it all! he has stolen. Although I may say to myself that he had not stolen, he has done so! I remain here and continue my operations. In ten years I shall have gained ten millions. I scatter them over the country. I keep nothing for myself; but what do I care? I am not doing this for myself. The general prosperity is increased. Trades are revived, factories and forges are multiplied, and thousands of families are happy. The district is populated. Villages spring up where there are only farms, and farms where nothing exists; wretchedness disappears, and with it debauchery, prostitution, robbery, murder, all the vices, all the crimes; this poor mother brings up her child, and a whole country is made rich and honest. Why, I was mad, absurd, when I talked of denouncing myself. I must guard against haste. What! because it pleases me to play the grand and the generous,—it is pure melodrama, after all;

because I only thought of myself, myself alone, and in order to save from a perhaps exaggerated though substantially just punishment a stranger, a thief, and an apparent scoundrel, — a whole department must perish, a poor woman die in the hospital, and a poor child starve in the streets, like dogs! Why, it is abominable! Without the mother seeing her child again, or the child knowing her mother! And all this on behalf of an old scamp of an apple-stealer, who has assuredly deserved the galleys for something else, if not for that. These are fine scruples which save the guilty and sacrifice the innocent, which save an old vagabond who has not many years to live, and who will be no more unhappy at the galleys than in his hovel, and destroy an entire population,—mothers, wives, and children. That poor little Cosette, who has only me in the world, and is doubtless at this moment shivering with cold in the den of these Thénardi-ers. There is another pair of wretches. And shall I fail in my duties to all these poor creatures, and commit such a folly as to denounce myself! Let us put things at the worst. Suppose that I commit a bad action in this, and that my conscience reproach me with it some day; there will be devotion and virtue in accepting, for the good of my neighbour, these reproaches, which weigh only on me, and this bad action, which compromises only my own soul.”

He got up and began to walk to and fro. This time he seemed satisfied with himself. Diamonds are only found in the darkness of the earth. Truths are only found in the depths of the thought. It seemed to him that after descending into these depths, after groping long in the densest of this darkness, he had found one of these diamonds, one of these truths, which he held in his hand, and which dazzled his eyes when he looked at it.

“Yes,” he thought, “I am on the right track, and hold the solution of the problem. A man must hold fast to something, and my mind is made up. I will let matters take their course, so no more vacillation or backsliding. It is for

the interest of all, not of myself. I am Madeleine, and remain Madeleine; and woe to the man who is Jean Valjean. I am no longer he. I do not know that man; and if any one happen to be Jean Valjean at this moment, he must look out for himself, for it does not concern me. It is a fatal name floating in darkness; and if it pause and alight on a head, all the worse for that head."

He looked into the small looking-glass over the mantelpiece, and said:—

"There! it has relieved me to come to a decision! I am quite another man now!"

He walked a little way and then stopped short. "Come," he said, "I must not shrink from any of the consequences of my resolve. There are threads which still attach me to Jean Valjean; they must be broken. There are in this very room objects which would betray me,—dumb things which would witness against me, and they must all disappear."

He took his purse from his pocket, and drew a small key out of it. He put this key in a lock, which could scarcely be seen, for it was hidden in the darkest part of the design on the paper that covered the walls. A secret place flew open,—a sort of false cupboard made between the corner of the wall and the mantelpiece. In this hiding-place there were only a few rags,—a blue blouse, worn trousers, an old knapsack, and a large thorn-stick, shod with iron at both ends. Any one who saw Jean Valjean pass through D—— in October, 1815, would easily have recognized all the articles of this miserable outfit. He had preserved them, as he had done the candlesticks, that they might constantly remind him of his starting-point; still he hid what came from the galleys, and displayed the candlesticks which came from the bishop. He cast a furtive glance at the door, as if afraid that it might open in spite of the bolt; and then, with a rapid movement, he made but one armful of the things which he had so religiously and perilously kept for so many years, and threw them all,—rags, stick, and knapsack,—into the fire. He closed the cupboard, and, redoubling his precau-

tions, which were now useless, since it was empty, dragged a heavy piece of furniture in front of it. In a few seconds the room and the opposite wall were lit up with a fierce, red, flickering glow. All was burning, and the thorn-stick crackled and threw out sparks into the middle of the room. From the knapsack, as it burned with all the rags it contained, fell something that glistened in the ashes. By stooping, it was easily recognized as a coin. It was doubtless the little Savoyard's two-franc piece. He did not look at the fire, and continued his walk backward and forward. All at once his eyes fell on the candlesticks, which shone vaguely on the mantelpiece in the firelight.

"Stay," he thought, "all Jean Valjean is in them, and they must be destroyed too."

He seized the candlesticks; there was a fire large enough to destroy their shape and convert them into unrecognizable ingots. He leaned over the hearth and warmed his hands for a moment. It was a great comfort to him. "What a pleasant heat!" he said.

He stirred the coals with one of the candlesticks, and in a moment they were both in the fire. All at once he fancied he heard a voice within him cry, "Jean Valjean! Jean Valjean!" His hair stood erect, and he became like a man who is listening to some terrible thing.

"Yes, that is right; finish!" said the voice; "complete your work; destroy those candlesticks, annihilate that memory! forget the bishop! forget everything! ruin that Champ-mathieu; that is right! Applaud yourself; come, all is settled, resolved, fixed. This old man, who does not know what they want with him, who perhaps has done nothing, an innocent man, whose whole misfortune is your name, on whom your name weighs like a crime, who will be taken for you, will be sentenced, and will end his days in abjectness and horror. That is excellent! Be an honest man yourself; remain mayor, honourable and honoured, enrich the town, assist the poor, bring up orphans, live happy, virtuous, and applauded; and all the time, while you are here

in joy and light, there will be a man who wears your red jacket, bears your name in ignominy, and drags your chain at the galleys. Yes, that is excellently arranged. Oh, you scoundrel!"

The perspiration beaded on his forehead, and he fixed his haggard eyes upon the candlesticks. The voice within, however, had not ended yet.

"Jean Valjean! There will be around you many voices making a great noise, speaking very loud and blessing you, and only one which none will hear, and which will curse you in the darkness. Well, listen, infamous man! All these blessings will fall back to the ground before they reach heaven, and the curse alone will ascend to God!"

This voice, very faint at first, which spoke from the obscurest nook of his conscience, had gradually become sonorous and terrible, and he now heard it in his very ear. He fancied it was not his own voice, and he seemed to hear the last words so distinctly that he looked around the room with a sort of terror.

"Is there any one here?" he asked in a loud, startled voice.

Then he continued, with a laugh which seemed almost idiotic:—

"What a fool I am! there can be nobody."

There was some one; but He was not of those whom the human eye can see.

He placed the candlesticks on the mantelpiece, and then resumed that melancholy, mournful tramp which aroused the sleeper underneath him. This pacing to and fro relieved him, and at the same time intoxicated him. It sometimes seems as if on supreme occasions people move about to ask advice of everything they pass. At the end of a few moments he no longer knew where he stood. He now recoiled with equal horror from the two resolves he had formed in turn. The two ideas that counselled him seemed one as desperate as the other. What a fatality that this Champ-mathieu should be taken for him! He was hurled down by

precisely the means which Providence at first seemed to have employed to strengthen his position.

There was a moment during which he considered his future. Denounce himself! great heavens! give himself up! He thought with immense despair of all that he must give up, of all that he must resume. He should be forced to bid farewell to this good, pure, radiant existence,—to the respect of all, to honour, to liberty! He should no longer stroll about the fields: he should no longer hear the birds sing in the month of May, or give alms to the little children! He should no longer feel the sweet glances of gratitude and love fixed upon him. He should leave this little house, which he had built, and his little bedroom. All appeared charming to him at this moment. He should no longer read those books or write at the little deal table. His old servant would no longer bring up his coffee in the morning. Great God! instead of all this, there would be the gang, the red jacket, the chain on his foot, fatigue, the dungeon, the camp-bed, and all the horrors which he knew! At his age, after all he had been! It would be different were he still young. But to be old, to be rudely addressed by anybody who pleased, to be searched by the jailer, and to receive blows from the keeper's stick; to thrust his naked feet into iron-shod shoes; to offer his leg morning and night to the hammer of the roundsman who visits the gang; to endure the curiosity of strangers who would be told, "*That is the famous Jean Valjean, who was mayor of M——.*" At night, when streaming with perspiration and crushed by fatigue, with a green cap on his head, to go up two by two, under the sergeant's lash, the ladder stairs of the hulks! Oh, what misery! Destiny, then, can be as wicked as an intelligent being and prove as monstrous as the human heart!

And, whatever he might do, he ever fell back into this overwhelming dilemma, which was the basis of his revery: remain in paradise, and become a demon there; or re-enter hell, and become an angel? What should he do, great God! what should he do? The torment, from which he had es-

caped with such difficulty, was again let loose within him, and his thoughts became confused once more. They assumed a confused and mechanical character akin to despair. The name of Romainville incessantly returned to his mind, with two lines of a song which he had formerly heard. He remembered that Romainville is a little wood, near Paris, where lovers go to pick lilacs in April. He reeled both physically and mentally. He walked like a little child allowed to go alone. At certain moments, he struggled against his lassitude, and tried to recover his mental balance; he tried to set himself, for the last time, the problem over which he had fallen prostrate with exhaustion,—must he denounce himself, or must he be silent? He could not succeed in seeing anything distinctly, the vague outlines of all the arguments sketched by his revery were dissipated in turn like smoke. Still, he felt that, however he resolved, and without any possibility of escape, something belonging to him must die; that he entered a sepulchre, whether on his right hand or his left, and that either his happiness or his virtue would be borne to the grave.

Alas! all his irresolution had again seized him, and he was no further advanced than at the beginning. Thus the wretched soul writhed in agony! Eighteen hundred years before this hapless man, the mysterious Being in whom are summed up all the sanctities and all the suffering of humanity, He, too, while the trees on the Mount of Olives shuddered before the wild wind of the infinite, long sought to put away the bitter cup which appeared before Him, dripping with shadows and overflowing with darkness in starry depths.

CHAPTER IV

THE FORMS THAT SUFFERING TAKES IN SLEEP

THREE o'clock in the morning had struck, and he had been walking about in this way for five hours without a break, when he sank into his chair. He fell asleep, and had a dream. This dream, like most dreams, had no connection with his situation save that it was painful and sinister, but it made an impression on him. "This nightmare struck him so much that he wrote it down at a later date, and we think we are bound to transcribe it literally; for, whatever the history of this man may be, it would be incomplete if we omitted it. It is the gloomy adventure of a sick soul. Here it is then; on the envelope we find the line,—*"The dream I had that night."*

"I was upon a plain, a large, mournful plain, on which no grass grew. It did not seem to me to be day, but it was not night. I was walking with my brother, the brother of my boyish years, of whom I am bound to say I never think, and whom I scarce remember. We were talking, and we met travellers. We spoke about a woman, formerly a neighbour of ours, who had always worked with her window open ever since she had lived on that street. While talking, we felt cold on account of this open window. There were no trees on the plain. We saw a man pass close by us; he was perfectly naked, of the colour of ashes, mounted on a horse of an earthen colour. The man had no hair, and we could see his skull and the veins on it. He held in his hand a wand, which was supple as a vine-twig and heavy as lead. This horseman passed and said nothing to us.

"My brother said to me: 'Let us turn into the hollow way.'

"There was a hollow way in which not a bramble or even a patch of moss could be seen; all was earth-coloured, even the sky. After going a few yards, I received no answer when I spoke, and I noticed that my brother was no longer with me. I entered a village that I saw, and I fancied that it must be Romainville. (Why Romainville?)¹ The first street I entered was deserted; I entered a second street, and behind the angle formed by the two streets a man was standing against the wall. I asked this man, 'What is this place? Where am I?' but he gave me no answer. I saw the door of a house open, and walked in.

¹ This parenthesis is by Jean Valjean.

"The first room was deserted, and I entered a second. Behind the door of this room there was a man leaning against the wall. I asked him, 'To whom does this house belong? Where am I?' but the man gave me no answer. I went out into the garden of the house, and it was deserted. Behind the first tree I found a man standing. I said to the man, 'Whose is this garden? Where am I?' but he made me no answer.

"I wandered about this village and perceived that it was a town. All the streets were deserted, all the doors open. Not a living soul passed along the street, moved in the rooms, or walked in the gardens. But there was behind every corner, every door, and every tree, a man standing silently. I never saw more than one at a time, and these men looked at me as I passed.

"I left the town and began to roam the fields. At the end of some time I turned back and saw a great crowd coming after me. I recognized all the men whom I had seen in the town, and they had strange heads. They did not appear to be in a hurry, and yet they walked faster than I, and made no noise in walking. In an instant this crowd joined me and surrounded me. The faces of these men were earth-coloured. Then the man I had seen first and questioned when I entered the town, said to me, 'Where are you going? Do you know that you have been dead for a long time?' I opened my mouth to answer, and I perceived that there was no one near me."

He woke, chilled to the marrow, for a wind, cold as the morning breeze, was rattling the open window. The fire had died away, the candle was nearly burned out, and it was still black night. He rose and went to the window; there were no stars in the sky. From his window he could see the yard and the street, and a dry, sharp sound on the ground below induced him to look out. He saw two red stars whose rays lengthened and shortened curiously in the gloom. As his mind was half submerged in the mist of dreams, he thought, "There are no stars in the sky; they are on earth now." A second sound like the first completely woke him, and he saw that those two stars were carriage-lamps, and by the light which they cast he could make out the shape of the vehicle,—it was a tilbury, in which a small white horse was harnessed. The sound he had heard was the pawing of the horse's hoof on the ground.

"What's the meaning of this?" he said to himself; "who can have come so early?"

At this moment there was a gentle tap at his bedroom

door. He shuddered from head to foot, and shouted in a terrible voice, "Who's there?"

Some one replied, "I sir," and he recognized his old servant's voice.

"Well," he replied, "what is it?"

"It is getting on for five o'clock, sir."

"What is that to me?"

"The tilbury has come, sir."

"What tilbury?"

"Did you not order one?"

"No," said he.

"The hostler says that he has come to fetch you, sir."

"What hostler?"

"Master Scaufflaire's."

This name made him start as if a flash of lightning had passed before his eyes.

"Ah, yes," he repeated, "Master Scaufflaire."

Could the old woman have seen him at this moment, she would have been horrified. There was a prolonged silence, during which he stupidly examined the candle flame, and took some of the burning wax from around the wick and rolled it in his fingers. The old woman, who was waiting, at length mustered up courage to raise her voice again.

"Mr. Mayor, what answer am I to give?"

"Say it is quite right, and that I shall be down directly."

CHAPTER V.

OBSTACLES

THE letter-bags between Arras and M—— were still carried in small mail-carts, dating from the empire. They were two-wheeled vehicles, lined with tawny leather, hung on springs, and having only two seats, one for the

driver, and another for a passenger. The wheels were armed with those long, offensive axle-trees which keep other carriages at a distance, and which may still be seen on German roads. The compartment for the bags was an immense oblong box at the back; it was painted black, and the carriage yellow. These vehicles, like which we have nothing at the present day, had something ugly and humpbacked about them, and when you saw them pass at a distance, or creep up a hill on the horizon, they resembled white ants which with a small body drag a heavy load after them. They went very fast, however, and the mail which left Arras at one in the morning, after the Paris mail had arrived, reached M—— a little before five.

On this morning, the mail-cart, just as it entered M——, while turning a corner, ran into a tilbury drawn by a white horse, coming in the opposite direction, in which there was only one person, a man wrapped in a cloak. The wheels of the tilbury received rather a heavy blow, and though the driver of the mail-cart shouted to the man to stop, he did not listen, but went on at a smart trot.

“That man is in a deuce of a hurry,” said the mail-carrier.

The man in this hurry was he whom we have just seen struggling in convulsions, assuredly deserving of pity. Where was he going? He could not have told. Why was he hurrying? He did not know. He was driving straight ahead at random. Whither? Doubtless to Arras; but he might also be going elsewhere. He felt this, and shivered. He buried himself in the darkness as in a gulf. Something urged him on; something attracted him. What was going on in him no one could tell, but all will understand it; for what man has not entered, at least once in his life, this obscure cavern of the unknown? However he had settled nothing, decided nothing, and done nothing; not one of the acts of his conscience had been final, and he was still as unsettled as at the beginning.

Why was he going to Arras? He repeated what he had already said on hiring Scaufflaire's gig, that, whatever the

result might be, there would be no harm in seeing with his own eyes, and judging matters for himself; that this was prudent, and he was bound to know what was going on; that he could not decide anything till he had observed and examined; that, at a distance, a man made mountains of mole-hills; that after all, when he had seen this Champmathieu, his conscience would probably be greatly relieved, and he could let the scoundrel go to the galleys in his place; that Javert would be there and the three convicts who had known him,—but, nonsense! they would not recognize him, for all conjectures and all suppositions were fixed on this Champmathieu, and there is nothing so obstinate as conjecture and supposition; hence he incurred no danger. It was doubtless a black moment, but he would emerge from it. After all, he held his destiny, however adverse it might be, in his own hands, and was master of it. He clung wildly to the latter thought.

Although, to tell the whole truth, he would have preferred not to go to Arras; yet he went. While reflecting, he lashed the horse, which was going at that regular, steady trot which covers two leagues and a half in an hour; and as the gig advanced, he felt something within him shrink. At daybreak he was in the open country, and the town of M—— was far behind him. He watched the horizon grow white; he looked, without seeing them, at all the cold figures of a winter dawn. Morning has its spectres like night. He did not see them; but unconsciously, and through a sort of physical penetration, those black outlines of trees and hills added something gloomy and sinister to the violent state of his soul. Every time that he passed one of those isolated houses which skirt high-roads, he said to himself: “And yet there are people asleep in there.” The trot of the horse, the bells on the harness, the wheels on the stones, produced a gentle, monotonous sound, which is delightful when you are merry, and mournful when you are sad.

It was broad daylight when he reached Hesdin, and he stopped at the inn to let the horse breathe and give him some oats. This horse, as Scaufflaire had said, belonged to that

small Boulonnais breed which has too large a head, too much belly, and not enough neck and shoulders; but which also has a broad chest, large crupper, lean, slender legs, and solid hoofs; it is an ugly, but a strong and healthy breed. The capital little beast had done five leagues in two hours, and had not turned a hair.

He did not get out of the tilbury; the hostler who brought the oats suddenly stooped down and examined the left wheel.

"Are you going far in this state?" said he.

Madeleine answered, almost without rousing himself from his reverie:—

"Why do you ask?"

"Have you come any distance?" continued the hostler.

"Five leagues."

"Ah!"

"Why do you say 'Ah'?"

The hostler bent down again, was silent for a moment, with his eye on the wheel, and then said, as he rose:—

"Because this wheel, which may have gone five leagues, cannot possibly go another mile."

Madeleine jumped out of the tilbury.

"What do you say, my friend?"

"I say that it is a miracle you and your horse did not roll into a ditch by the roadside. Just look!"

The wheel was, in fact, seriously damaged. The blow dealt it by the mail-cart had broken two spokes, and strained the hub, so that the nut was loose.

"My good fellow," he said to the hostler, "is there a wheelwright here?"

"Of course, sir."

"Be good enough to go and fetch him."

"He lives close by. Hillo, Master Bourgaillard!"

Master Bourgaillard was standing in his door-way; he examined the wheel, and made a face like a surgeon looking at a broken leg.

"Can you mend this wheel?"

"Yes, sir."

"When can I start again?"

"To-morrow; there is a good day's work. Are you in a hurry, sir?"

"In a great hurry; I must set out again in an hour at the latest.

"It is impossible, sir."

"I will pay anything you ask."

"Impossible."

"Well, in two hours?"

"It is impossible for to-day; you will not be able to go on till to-morrow. There are two new spokes and a hub to be made."

"My business cannot wait till to-morrow. Suppose, instead of mending this wheel, you were to put another on?"

"How so?"

"You are a wheelwright and have probably a wheel you can sell me, and then I could set out again directly."

"I have no ready-made wheel to suit your gig; for wheels are sold in pairs, and it is not easy to match one."

"Then sell me a pair of wheels."

"All wheels, sir, do not fit all axle-trees."

"At any rate, try."

"It is useless, sir; I have only cart-wheels for sale, for ours is a small place."

"Have you a gig I can hire?"

The wheelwright had noticed at a glance that the tilbury was a hired vehicle; he shrugged his shoulders.

"You take such good care of the gigs that you hire, that if I had one I would not let it to you."

"Well, sell me one."

"I have not one."

"What! not a tax-cart? I am not particular, as you see."

"This is a small place. I have certainly," the wheelwright added, "an old calash in my stable which belongs to a person in the town, who gave it to me to take care of, and who only uses it on the thirty-sixth day of every

month,—that is to say, never. I could certainly let it out to you, for it is no concern of mine, but the owner must not see it pass; besides, it is a calash, and will want two horses.”

“I will hire post-horses.”

“Where are you going, sir?”

“To Arras.”

“And you wish to get there to-day?”

“Certainly.”

“By taking post-horses?”

“Why not?”

“Does it make any difference to you if you reach Arras at four o’clock to-morrow morning?”

“Of course it does.”

“There is one thing to be said about hiring post-horses. Have you your passport, sir?”

“Yes.”

“Well, if you take post-horses, you will not reach Arras before to-morrow. We are on a cross-country road. The relays are badly served, and the horses are out at work. This is the plowing season, and as strong teams are required, horses are taken anywhere, from the post-houses as well as elsewhere. You will have to wait three or four hours, sir, at each station, and only go at a foot-pace, for there are many hills to climb.”

“Well, I will ride. Take the horse out. I suppose I can buy a saddle here?”

“Of course; but will this horse carry a saddle?”

“No, I remember now that it will not.”

“In that case — ?”

“But surely I can hire a saddle-horse in the village?”

“What! to go to Arras without a break?”

“Yes.”

“You would want such a horse as is not to be found in these parts. In the first place, you would have to buy it, as you are a stranger; but you would not find one to buy or hire for five hundred francs,—not for a thousand.”

“What is to be done?”

"The best thing, to speak plainly, is to let me mend the wheel and put off your journey till to-morrow."

"To-morrow will be too late."

"Confound it!"

"Is there not the Arras mail-coach? When does that pass?"

"Not till to-night. Both posts go at night, the outward as well as the inward one."

"What! you will take a whole day to mend that wheel!"

"A day, and a gcod long one."

"Suppose you employed two workmen?"

"Ay, if I had ten."

"Suppose the spokes were tied with ropes?"

"That might answer for the spokes, but not for the hub. Besides, the fellow is in a bad state."

"Is there any one who lets out vehicles in the town?"

"No."

"Is there another wheelwright?"

The hostler and the wheelright replied simultaneously, tossing their heads:—

"No."

He felt an immense joy, for it was evident that Providence was interfering. It was Providence that had broken the wheel and stopped his journey. He had not yielded to this first summons; he had made every possible effort to continue his journey; he had loyally and scrupulously exhausted all resources; he had not been deterred by the season, fatigue, or expense; and he had nothing to reproach himself with. If he did not go farther, it did not concern him; it was not his fault, it was not the doing of his conscience, but of Providence.

He breathed freely and fully for the first time since Javert's visit. He felt as if the iron hand which had constrained his heart for twenty hours had relaxed its grasp; God now appeared to be on his side, and declared Himself openly. He said to himself that he had done all in his power, and need only return home quietly.

Had the conversation with the wheelwright taken place in an inn-room, it would probably not have been heard by any one; matters would have remained in this state, and we should probably not have had to record any of the following events, but the conversation took place in the street. Any colloquy in the street inevitably produces a crowd, for there are always people who only ask to be spectators. While he was questioning the wheelwright some passers-by stopped, and a lad to whom no one paid any attention, after listening for some moments, ran off. Just as the traveller had made up his mind to turn back, this boy returned, accompanied by an old woman.

"Sir," said the woman, "my boy tells me that you wish to hire a conveyance."

This simple remark, made by an old woman led by a child, made the perspiration pour down his back. He fancied he saw the hand which had let him loose reappear in the shadow behind him, ready to clutch him again. He replied:—

"Yes, my good woman, I want to hire a gig." And he hastily added, "But there is not one in the town."

"Yes, there is," said the old woman.

"Where?" asked the wheelwright.

"At my house," answered the old crone.

He gave a start, for the fatal hand had again seized him. The poor woman really had a sort of wicker-cart under a shed. The wheelwright and the hostler, sorry to see the traveller escape them, interfered:—

"It is a frightful rattle-trap, and has no springs; the inside seats are actually hung with leathern straps; it leaks, the wheels are rusty, and ready to fall to pieces; it will not go much farther than the tilbury; the gentleman had better not get into it,"—and so on.

All this was true, but the rattle-trap, whatever it might be, went on two wheels, and could go to Arras. He paid what was asked, left the tilbury to be repaired against his return, had the white horse put into the cart, climbed in, and went

his away. When the cart moved off, he confessed that a moment before he had felt a certain joy at the thought that he could not go where he was now going. He examined this joy with a sort of passion, and found it absurd. Why did he feel joy at turning back? After all, he was making this journey of his own free will, and no one forced him to do so. And assuredly nothing could happen, except what he liked. As he was leaving Hesdin, he heard a voice shouting to him, "Stop, stop!" He stopped the cart with a hurried movement in which there was something feverish and convulsive that resembled hope. It was the old woman's boy.

"Sir," he said, "it was I who got you the cart."

"Well?"

"You have given me nothing."

He who gave to all, and so readily, considered this demand exorbitant, and almost odious.

"Oh, it's you, scamp," he said; "well, you will not get anything."

He flogged his horse, which started again at a smart trot. He had lost much time at Hesdin, and wished to make it up. The little horse was courageous, and worked for two; but it was February, it had been raining, the roads were bad. The cart, too, ran much more heavily than the tilbury, and there were numerous hills. He took nearly four hours to go from Hesdin to St. Pol; four hours for five leagues! At St. Pol he pulled up at the first inn, and had the horse put in a stable. As he had promised Scaufflaire, he stood near the crib while it was eating. His mind was filled with troubled and confused thoughts. The landlady entered the stable.

"Do you not wish to breakfast, sir?"

"Eh! Yes, of course!" he said. "Why, I am very hungry."

He followed the woman, who had a healthy, cheerful face; she led him to a low-ceiled room, where there were tables covered with oil-cloth.

"Make haste," said he, "for I must be off; I am in a great hurry."

A plump Flemish servant girl hastened to lay the cloth, and he looked at her with a feeling of comfort.

"That is what ailed me," he thought; "I had not breakfasted."

He seized the bread, bit a mouthful, and then slowly laid it back on the table, and did not touch it again. A wagoner was sitting at another table, and Madeleine said to him:—

"Why is this bread so bitter?"

The wagoner was a German, and did not understand him; he returned to the stable to his horse. An hour later he had left St. Pol, and was proceeding toward Tinqués, which is only five leagues from Arras. What did he do during the drive? Of what was he thinking? As in the morning, he looked at the trees, the thatched roofs, the plowed fields, and the diversities of a landscape which every turn in the road changed as he passed. What is more melancholy and more profound than to see a thousand different objects for the first and last time! This is a form of contemplation which sometimes suffices the soul, and almost does away with the necessity of thought. To travel is to be born and to die at every moment. Perhaps, in the vaguest region of his mind, he made a comparison between the changing horizon and human existence, for everything in this life is continually flying before us. Darkness and light are blended; after radiant light comes eclipse; we look, we hasten, we stretch forth our hands to grasp fugitive things; every event is a turn in the road, and all at once we are old. We feel a shock, all is black, we see an obscure door, and the gloomy horse of life which has dragged us thus far, stops, and we see a veiled, unknown form unharnessing it amid the shadows. Twilight was setting in as the school-boys, leaving school, saw this traveller enter Tinqués. He did not halt there, but as he left the village, a road-mender, who was laying stones, raised his head, and said:—

"Your horse is very tired."

The poor brute, in fact, could not get beyond a walk.

"Are you going to Arras?" continued the road-mender.

"If you go at that pace, you will not reach it very soon."

He stopped his horse, and asked the road-mender: —

"How far is it from here to Arras?"

"Nearly seven long leagues."

"How so? The post-book says only five and a quarter leagues."

"Ah," returned the road-mender, "you do not know that the road is under repair; you will find it closed about a mile farther on, and it is impossible to pass."

"Indeed?"

"You must take the road on the left, leading to Carency, and cross the river; when you reach Camblin, turn to the right, for it is the Mont St. Eloy road that runs to Arras."

"But I shall lose my way in the dark."

"You do not belong to these parts?"

"No."

"And it is a cross-road; stay, sir," continued the road-mender, "will you let me give you a piece of advice? Your horse is tired, so return to Tinqués, where there is a good inn; sleep there, and go to Arras to-morrow."

"I must be there to-night."

"That is different. In that case, go back to the inn all the same, and hire a second horse. The stable-boy will act as your guide across the country."

He took the road-mender's advice, turned back, and half an hour after passed the same spot at a sharp trot with a strong second horse. A stable lad, who called himself a postilion, sat on the shafts of the cart. Still he felt that he had lost time, for it was now dark. They entered the cross-road, and it soon became frightful; the cart jolted out of one rut into another, but he said to the postilion: —

"Keep on at a trot, and I will give you a double fee."

In one of the jolts the whiffle-tree broke.

"The whiffle-tree is broken, sir," said the postilion, "and

I do not know how to fasten my horse, and the road is very bad by night. If you will go back and sleep at Tinques, we can get to Arras early to-morrow."

He answered, "Have you a piece of rope and a knife?"

"Yes, sir."

Madeleine cut a branch and made a whiffle-tree; it was a further loss of twenty minutes, but they started again at a gallop. The plain was dark, and a low black fog was creeping over the hills. A strong wind, which came from the sea, made a noise in every quarter of the horizon like that of some one moving furniture. All that he could see had an attitude of terror; for how many things shudder beneath the mighty breath of night! The cold pierced him, for he had eaten nothing since the previous morning. He vaguely recalled his other night-excursion over the great plain of D—— eight years before, and it seemed to him but yesterday. A clock struck from a distant steeple, and he asked the lad:—

"What o'clock is that?"

"Seven, sir, and we shall be at Arras by eight, for we have only three leagues to go."

At this moment he made for the first time this reflection, and considered it strange that it had not occurred to him before: perhaps all the trouble he was taking was thrown away; he did not even know the hour for the trial, and he might at least have asked about that. It was foolish to go on thus, without knowing if it would be of any use. Then he made some mental calculations, usually the sittings of assize courts begin at nine o'clock. This matter would not occupy much time; the theft of the apples would be easily proved, and then it would be merely a question of identity, four or five witnesses to hear, and little for the counsel to say. He should not arrive until it was all over.

The postilion flogged the horses; they crossed the river and left Mont St. Eloy behind them; the night was growing darker and darker.

CHAPTER VI

SISTER SIMPLICITY IS SORELY TRIED

AT this same moment Fantine was joyful. She had passed a very bad night, she coughed fearfully, and her fever was greater; she had dreams. In the morning, when the physician paid his visit, she was raving; he felt alarmed, and begged to be called as soon as M. Madeleine arrived. All the morning she was gloomy, said little, and plucked at her sheet, muttering in a low voice, and calculating what seemed to be distances. Her eyes were hollow and fixed; they seemed almost extinct, and then, at moments, they were re-lit and flashed like stars. It seems as if, on the approach of a certain dark hour, the brightness of heaven fills those whom the brightness of earth is quitting. Every time that Sister Simplicity asked her how she was, she invariably answered, "Well, but I should like to see M. Madeleine."

A few months previously, when Fantine lost her last modesty, her last shame, and her last joy, she was the shadow of herself; now she was the ghost of herself. Physical suffering had completed the work of moral suffering. This creature of five-and-twenty years of age, had a wrinkled forehead, sunken cheeks, a pinched nose, a leaden complexion, a bony neck, projecting shoulder-blades, thin limbs, an earthy skin, and white hairs were mingled with the gold. Alas! how illness hastens old age! At midday the physician returned, wrote a prescription, inquired whether M. Madeleine had been to the infirmary, and shook his head. M. Madeleine usually came at three o'clock; and as punctuality was kindness, he was punctual. At about half-past two Fantine began to grow agitated, and in the next twenty minutes asked the nun more than ten times, "What o'clock is it?"

Three o'clock struck; at the third stroke, Fantine, who

usually could scarce move in her bed, sat up; she clasped her thin yellow hands in a convulsive clasp, and the nun heard her give one of those deep sighs, which seem to remove a crushing weight. Then Fantine turned and looked at the door; but no one entered, and the door did not open. She sat thus for a quarter of an hour, with her eyes fixed on the door, motionless, and holding her breath. The nun did not dare to speak to her, and as the clock struck the quarter, Fantine fell back on her pillow. She said nothing, and again began to pluck at her sheet. The half-hour passed, then the hour, and no one came. Every time the clock struck Fantine sat up, looked at the door, and then fell back again. Her thoughts could be clearly read, but she did not say a word, did not complain or blame any one; she merely coughed in a sad way. It seemed as if something dark were settling down on her. Every now and then she smiled. She was livid, and her lips were blue.

When five o'clock struck, the sister heard her say very softly and sweetly: "As I am going away to-morrow, it was wrong of him not to come to-day." Sister Simplicity herself was surprised at M. Madeleine's delay. Meantime Fantine looked up at the canopy of her bed, and seemed trying to remember something; all at once she began to sing in a voice faint as a sigh. The nun listened; this was Fantine's song:—

"We will stroll up and down,
And buy toys in the town.
The roses are red, the violets are blue;
I love my love, for violets are blue.

"Last night the Virgin Mary by my bed
Stood, wrapped in a mantle gay;
'Come, hide beneath my veil, she said,
'The baby that you begged of me one day.'—
Run to the town, buy linen fair,
Buy thread; your little thimble wear.

"We will stroll up and down,
And buy toys in the town.

"Sweet Mary maid, beside my bed
I have a crib adorned with ribbons red.
God might give me His brightest star,
I'd love the child you gave me better far.
And what shall I do with the linen fair?
Make swaddling clothes for my son and heir.

"The roses are red, the violets are blue;
I love my love, for violets are blue.

"Wash the linen fair in the running stream.
Spoil it not, soil it not, but sew me aright
A pretty coat with many a seam,
Brodered thick with field flowers bright.
My baby is dead, Lady. What's to do now?
A winding sheet soft to bury it, I trow.

"We will stroll up and down,
And buy toys in the town.
The roses are red, the violets blue;
I love my love, for violets are blue."

It was an old cradle-song with which she had in former times lulled her little Cosette to sleep, and which had not once recurred to her mind during the five years she had been parted from her child. She sang with so sad a voice and to so soft an air, that it was enough to make any one weep, even a nun. The sister, who was accustomed to stern facts, felt a tear in her eye. The clock struck six and Fantine did not seem to hear it; she appeared to pay no heed to anything about her. Sister Simplicity sent a servant-girl to inquire of the portress of the factory whether M. Madeleine had returned and would be at the infirmary soon; the girl came back in a few minutes. Fantine was still motionless and apparently engaged with her own thoughts. The servant told Sister Simplicity in a very low voice that the mayor had set off before six o'clock that morning in a small tilbury harnessed to a white horse, cold as it was; that he had gone alone, without a driver; that no one knew what direction he had taken, for while some said they had seen him turn into the Arras road, others declared they had met him on the Paris road. He was, as usual, very gentle when he went away, and he had merely told his servant that she need not expect him that night.

While the two women were whispering with their backs turned to Fantine's bed, the sister questioning and the servant conjecturing, Fantine, with the feverish impetuosity of certain organic diseases which blend the free movements of health with the frightful emaciation of death, had knelt in bed, with her two clenched hands supported by the pillow, and listened with her head thrust between the curtains. All at once she cried:—

“You are talking about M. Madeleine; why do you whisper? What is he doing, and why does he not come?”

Her voice was so loud and hoarse that the two women fancied it a man's voice and turned in alarm.

“Answer!” cried Fantine.

The servant stammered:—

“The portress told me that he could not come to-day.”

“My child,” said the sister, “be calm and lie down again.”

Fantine, without changing her attitude, went on in a loud voice and with an accent at once imperious and heart-rending:—

“He cannot come; why not? You know the reason. You were whispering it to each other, and I insist upon knowing.”

The servant hastily whispered in the nun's ear, “Tell her that he is engaged in the town council.”

Sister Simplicity blushed slightly, for it was a falsehood that the servant proposed to her. On the other hand, it seemed to her that to tell the patient the truth would doubtless be to deal her a terrible blow, and this was serious in Fantine's present condition. The blush lasted but a little while; the sister raised her calm, sad eyes to Fantine's face, and said:—

“The mayor is gone on a journey.”

Fantine rose and sat upon her heels, her eyes sparkled, and an ineffable joy shone on her sad face.

“Gone!” she exclaimed. “He has gone to fetch Cosette.”

Then she raised her hands to heaven, her face was ineffably bright, and her lips moved; she was praying.

When she had finished, she said, "Sister, I will lie down again and do everything you wish; I was naughty just now. I ask your pardon for speaking so loud, for I know that is wrong, dear sister; but, you see, I am so happy. God is good, and M. Madeleine is good; only think, he has gone to Montfermeil to fetch my little Cosette."

She lay down again, helped the nun to smooth her pillow, and kissed a little silver cross she wore on her neck, and which Sister Simplicity had given her.

"My child," said the sister, "try to sleep now, and do not talk any more." Fantine took the sister's hand in her moist palms, and the latter was pained to feel that damp sweat.

"He started this morning for Paris, and indeed he need not go through Paris; for Montfermeil is a little to the left before you get there. You remember how he said to me yesterday when I asked him about Cosette, 'Soon, soon'? He wants to give me a surprise; for, do you know, he made me sign a letter to get her back from the Thénardiens. They will have nothing to say, will they? They cannot refuse to give up Cosette, can they? for they are paid; the authorities would not allow a child to be kept, now that there is nothing owing. Sister, do not make me signs that I must not speak, for I am extremely happy. I am getting on very well; I feel no pain at all. I shall see Cosette again, and I even feel very hungry. It is nearly five years since I saw her; you cannot imagine how fond one gets of children,—and then she must be so pretty. She has such pretty pink fingers, and she will have beautiful hands. She had the most ridiculous little hands, when she was a year old; like that! She must be a great girl now, for she is going on for seven. I call her Cosette, but her real name is Euphrasie. This morning I was looking at the dust on the mantelpiece, and I had a notion that I should soon see Cosette again. Good Lord! how wrong it is to be so many years without

seeing your child! We ought to reflect that life is not eternal. Oh, how kind it is of the mayor to go! Is it true that it is so cold? I hope he took his cloak. He will be here again to-morrow, will he not? and we will make a holiday of it. To-morrow morning, sister, you must remind me to put on my little cap with the lace border. Montfermeil is a great distance, I came from there to this town on foot, and it took me a long time; but the stage-coaches travel so quickly! He will be here to-morrow with Cosette. How far is it to Montfermeil?"

The sister who had no notion of distances, answered, "Oh, I believe he can be here to-morrow."

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" said Fantine; "I shall see Cosette to-morrow, dear sister! I am not ill now; I feel wild; I would dance if you asked me."

Any one who had seen her a quarter of an hour before would not have understood it; she was now quite flushed, she spoke with an eager, natural voice, and her whole face was one smile. At times she laughed and talked to herself in a low voice. A mother's joy is almost childish.

"Well!" said the nun, "you are happy now. So obey me and do not talk any more."

Fantine laid her head on the pillow, and said in a low voice, "Yes, lie down, behave yourself, for you are going to have your child. Sister Simplicity is right; everybody here is right."

And then without stirring, without moving her head, she began to look about with wide open eyes and a joyous air, and said nothing more. The sister closed the curtains, hoping she would fall off to sleep. The physician came between seven and eight o'clock. Hearing no sound, he fancied Fantine asleep. He entered softly and walked up to the bed on tiptoe. He opened the curtains, and by the light of the night lamp, saw Fantine's large calm eyes fixed on him. She said to him:—

"Oh, sir, my child will be allowed to sleep in a little cot by my bedside, will she not?"

The physician fancied she was delirious. She added: "Only look; there is exactly room."

The physician took Sister Simplicity aside, and she explained the matter to him; that M. Madeleine was absent for a day or two, and being in doubt, they had not thought it right to undeceive the patient, who fancied that he had gone to Montfermeil, and she might possibly be in the right. The physician approved, and returned to Fantine's bed. She said to him:—

"In the morning, when the little puss wakes up, I will say good-day to her; and at night, I, who do not sleep, will listen to her sleeping. Her gentle little breathing will do me good."

"Give me your hand," said the physician.

"Oh, yes; you do not know that I am cured. Cosette comes to-morrow."

The physician was surprised to find her better; the oppression was slighter, her pulse had gained strength, and a sort of new life animated the poor exhausted girl.

"Doctor," she continued, "did the sister tell you that M. Madeleine had gone to fetch the midget?"

The physician recommended silence, and that all painful emotion should be avoided. He prescribed a dose of quinine, and if the fever returned in the night, a sedative; and as he went away he said to the sister: "She is better. If the mayor were to come with the child to-morrow, who knows? There are such astounding crises. Great joy has been known to check disease; and though hers is an organic malady, and in an advanced stage, it is all a mystery. We might perchance save her."

CHAPTER VII

THE TRAVELLER ON HIS ARRIVAL TAKES PRECAUTIONS
FOR HIS RETURN

IT was nearly eight in the evening when the cart which he left on the road drove under the archway of the post-house at Arras. The man whom we have followed up to this moment got out, discharged the second horse, and himself led the white pony to the stables; then he pushed open the door of a billiard-room on the ground-floor, sat down, and rested his elbows on the table. He had taken fourteen hours for a journey for which he had allowed six. He did himself the justice to admit that it was no fault of his, but in his heart he was not sorry. The landlady came in.

"Will you sleep here, sir?"

He shook his head.

"The hostler says that your horse is extremely tired." Here he broke his silence.

"Will it not be able to start again to-morrow morning?"

"Oh, dear, no, sir; it requires at least two days' rest."

"Is not the post-office in this house?"

"Yes, sir."

The landlady led him to the office, where he showed his passport, and inquired whether he could return to M—— the same night by the mail-coach. Only one seat, the seat beside the mail-carrier, was vacant; he took it, and paid for it. "Do not fail, sir," said the clerk, "to be here to start at one o'clock precisely."

This done, he left the hotel, and began to walk the streets. He was not acquainted with Arras, the streets were dark, and he walked about haphazard, but he seemed obstinately determined ont to ask his way of passers-by. He crossed the little river Crinchon, and found himself in a labyrinth

of narrow lanes, in which he lost his way. A man came toward him with a lantern, whom, after some hesitation, he resolved to address, though not till he had looked before and behind him, as if afraid lest anybody should overhear the question he was about to ask.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me the way to the court-house, sir?" he said.

"You do not belong to the town, sir?" replied the man, who was rather elderly; "well, follow me. I am going in the direction of the court-house,—that is to say, of the Town Hall; for the court-house is under repair just now, and the court is sitting temporarily at the Town Hall."

"Are the assizes held there?" he asked.

"Of course, sir; you must know that what is now the Town Hall was the bishop's palace before the Revolution. Monsieur de Conzlé, who was bishop in '92, built a large hall there, and the court meets in this hall."

On the way the man said to him:—

"If you wish to witness a trial, you are rather late, for the court usually closes at six o'clock."

However, when they reached the great square the old man pointed out four lofty lighted windows in a vast, gloomy building.

"On my word, sir," he said, "you have come in time, and are in luck's way. Do you see those four windows? They belong to the assize courts. As there are lights, it is not closed yet; there must have been a long trial, and they are having an evening session. Are you interested in the trial? Is it a criminal case, or are you a witness?"

He answered:—

"I have not come on business; I only wish to speak to one of the lawyers."

"That is another matter. That is the door, sir, where the sentry stands, and you have only to go up the grand staircase."

He followed the old man's instructions, and a few minutes later was in a large hall, in which there were a good

many people, and groups of lawyers in their gowns stood gossiping together.

It is always painful to see these assemblies of men dressed in black, conversing in low voices on the threshold of a court of justice. It is rare to find charity and pity in their remarks, for they generally express sentences settled before trial. All such groups appear to the thoughtful observer so many gloomy hives, in which buzzing minds build in community all sorts of dark edifices. This hall, which was large, and lighted by one lamp only, served as a waiting-room; folding doors, at this moment closed, separated it from the chamber in which the assizes were held. It was so dark that he did not hesitate to address the first barrister he came across.

"How is it going, sir?" he said.

"It is over."

"Over!" The word was repeated in such a tone that the barrister turned round.

"I beg your pardon, sir; perhaps you are a relative?"

"No, I know no one here. Was a verdict of guilty brought in?"

"Of course; it could not possibly be otherwise."

"Penal servitude?"

"For life."

He continued in a voice so faint that it was scarcely audible:—

"Then the identity was proved?"

"What identity?" the barrister retorted. "Nothing of the sort was required. The affair was simple,—the woman had killed her child; infanticide was proved, the jury recommended her to mercy, and she was sentenced to imprisonment for life."

"It was a woman, then?"

"Why, of course; a girl of the name of Limosin. To whom do you refer, pray?"

"Nobody; but if the trial is over, how is it that the court is still lighted?"

"It is for the other trial which began about two hours back."

"What other trial?"

"Oh, that is a clear case too; it is a beggar, a galley-slave, who has been robbing. I forget his name, but he has a regular bandit's face, on the strength of which I would send him to the galleys if for nothing else."

"Is there any way to get into the court, sir?"

"I think not, for it is very full. Still, the trial is suspended, and some persons have gone out. When the court resumes, you can try."

"Which is the way in?"

"By that large door."

The barrister left him; in a few minutes he had experienced every possible emotion almost simultaneously, and confusedly blended. The words of this indifferent person had by turns pierced his heart like needles of ice and like red-hot sword-blades. When he found that the trial was not over, he breathed again; but he could not have told whether what he felt were satisfaction or pain. He walked up to several groups and listened to what they were saying. As the docket was very heavy, the judge had selected for this day two simple and short cases. They had begun with the infanticide, and were now engaged with the convict, the "old offender." This man had stolen apples. This did not seem clearly proved, but it was proved that he had already been at the Toulon galleys. It was this that made his case look badly. His examination and the depositions of the witnesses were over; but there were still the speech for the defence and the summing up, and hence it would not be over till midnight. The man would probably be condemned, for the attorney-general was sharp, and seldom "missed" his man; he was a witty fellow who wrote verses. An usher stood at the door leading into the court-room, and he asked this usher:—

"Will this door be opened soon?"

"It will not be opened," said the usher.

"Will it not be opened when the court resumes its sitting?"

"The hearing has begun," replied the usher, "but the door will not be opened."

"Why not?"

"Because the hall is full."

"What! is there no room?"

"Not for a soul more. The door is closed, and no one can go in."

The usher added after a pause: "There are certainly two or three seats behind the judge, but he only admits public officials to them."

So saying, the usher turned his back on him. He withdrew with hanging head, crossed the waiting-room, and went slowly downstairs, hesitating at every step. He was probably holding counsel with himself; the violent struggle which had been going on within him since the previous day was not over, and every moment he entered upon some new phase. On reaching the landing, he leaned against the balusters and folded his arms; but all at once he took out his pocket-book, tore a leaf from it, and wrote in pencil upon it by the light of the street lamp, "M. Madeleine, Mayor of M. sur M.;" then he hurried up the stairs, cleft the crowd, walked up to the usher, handed him the paper, and said with an air of authority, "Hand this to the judge." The usher took the paper, glanced at it, and obeyed.

CHAPTER VIII

INSIDE THE COURT

WITHOUT suspecting the fact, the mayor of M—— enjoyed a certain celebrity. For seven years his reputation for virtue had filled the whole of Lower Boulonnais; it had gradually crossed the border line into two or

three adjoining departments. In addition to the considerable service which he had done the town, by restoring the trade in jet beads, there was not one of the one hundred and forty parishes in the bailiwick of M—— which was not indebted to him for some kindness. He had even assisted and promoted, when necessary, the trades of other departments; thus he had supported, with his credit and funds, the linen factory at Boulogne, the cotton industry at Nivers, and the manufacture of canvas by water-power at Bourbus sur Cauche. The name of M. Madeleine was everywhere pronounced with veneration. Arras and Douai envied the fortunate little town of M—— its mayor. The councillor of the royal court of Douai, who presided at the present Arras assizes, like every one else, was acquainted with this deeply and universally honoured name. When the usher discreetly opened the door of the robing-room, leaned over the judge's chair, and handed him the paper, adding, "This gentleman wishes to hear the trial," the judge, with a quick, deferential movement, took up a pen, wrote a few words at the foot of the paper, and returned it to the usher, saying, "Show him in."

The unhappy man whose history we are recording, had remained near the door of the court at the same spot and in the same attitude as when the usher left him. He heard through his reverie some one say, "Will you do me the honour to follow me, sir?" It was the same usher who had turned his back on him just before, and who now bowed to the ground. At the same time the usher handed him the paper; he unfolded it, and as he happened to be near the lamp, he was able to read, "The judge presents his respects to M. Madeleine." He crumpled the paper in his hand, as if the words had a strange and bitter after-taste. He followed the usher, and a few minutes later found himself alone in a severe-looking wainscoted room, lighted by two wax candles standing on a green-baize-covered table. The last words of the usher, who had just left him, still rang in his ears: "You are in the council chamber; you have only

to turn the handle of that door, and you will find yourself in court behind the judge's chair." These words mingled in his thoughts with a confused recollection of narrow passages and dark staircases through which he had just passed. The usher left him alone; the supreme moment had arrived. He tried to collect himself, but could not; for it is especially at those hours when men have most need of thought that all threads are broken in the brain. He was on the very spot where judges deliberate and pass sentence. He gazed with stupid tranquillity at this peaceful and yet fearful room, in which so many existences had been broken, where his name would ere long echo, and which his destiny was at this moment traversing. He looked at the walls and then at himself, astonished that it was this room and that it was he. He had not eaten for more than twenty-four hours; he was tired by the shaking of the cart, but he did not feel it. It seemed to him that he did not feel anything. He walked up to a black frame hanging on the wall which contained under glass an old autograph letter of Jean Nicolas Pache, mayor of Paris and minister, dated, doubtless in error, June 9, of the year II., in which Pache forwarded a list of the ministers and deputies under arrest. Any who had seen him at that moment would doubtless have imagined that this letter struck him as very curious, for he did not take his eyes from it, and read it two or three times; but he read it without paying attention, and unconsciously. He was thinking of Fantine and Cosette.

While thinking, he turned, and his eyes fell upon the brass handle of the door that separated him from the assize court. He had almost forgotten this door; but his eye, at first calm, rested on it, then became wild and fixed, and gradually filled with terror. Drops of perspiration stood out between his hair, and trickled down his temples. At one moment he made, with a sort of authority blended with rebellion, that indescribable gesture which signifies and says so well—"By heaven, who forces me?" Then he turned hurriedly, saw before him the door by which he had entered,

walked up to it, opened it, and went out. He was no longer in that room, but in a passage, a long, narrow passage, cut up by steps and wickets, making all sorts of turns, lit up here and there by lamps resembling sick persons' night-lights, — the passage by which he had come. He breathed, he listened; not a sound behind him, not a sound before him, and he began to fly as if he were pursued. When he had passed several turnings, he listened again; there were still the same silence and gloom around him. He gasped, staggered, and leaned against the wall; the stone was cold, the perspiration was frozen on his forehead, and he drew himself up with a shudder. Then, standing there alone, trembling from cold, and perhaps from something else, he thought. He had thought all night, he had thought all day; but he heard within him only a voice that said, "Alas!"

A quarter of an hour passed thus; at length he bowed his head, sighed in agony, let his arms drop, and turned back. He walked slowly, and as if stunned; he looked as if he had been caught in the act of flight and were being brought back. He entered the robing-room, and the first thing he saw was the handle of the door. This handle, which was round and made of polished brass, shone like a terrific star; he looked at it as a sheep might look at the eye of a tiger. He could not take his eyes from it, and from time to time he advanced a step toward the door. Had he listened he would have heard, like a confused murmur, the noise in the adjoining court; but he did not listen, and did not hear. All at once, and without knowing how, he found himself close to the door; he convulsively seized the handle, and the door opened. He was in the assize court.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRIAL

HE advanced a step, closed the door mechanically after him, and gazed at the scene before him. It was a large hall, dimly lighted, at one moment full of sounds, and at another of silence, in which all the machinery of a criminal trial was displayed, with its paltry and lugubrious gravity, in the midst of a crowd. At one end of the hall, the one where he was, judges with a vacant look, in shabby gowns, biting their nails or shutting their eyes; barristers in all sorts of attitudes; soldiers with hard, honest faces; old stained wainscoting, a dirty ceiling; tables covered with baize, which was rather yellow than green; doors blackened by hands; pot-house sconces, which produced more smoke than light, hanging from nails driven into the wall; upon the tables, candles in brass candlesticks,—all was obscurity, ugliness, and sadness. But yet all this produced an austere and august impression; for the grand human thing called law and the great divine thing called justice, were visible therein.

No one in this crowd paid any attention to him, for all eyes converged on a single point,—a wooden bench placed against a little door, along the wall to the left of the judge. On this bench, which was illumined by several candles, sat a man between two policemen. This man was *the* man. He did not seek him, he saw him; his eyes went there naturally, as if they had known before-hand where that figure was. He fancied he saw himself; aged, not absolutely alike in face, but exactly similar in attitude and appearance, with his bristling hair, with his savage restless eyes, and his blouse, just as he was on the day when he entered D——, full of hatred, and concealing in his mind that hideous mass of frightful thoughts which he had spent nineteen years in col-

lecting on the floor of the galleys. He said to himself with a shudder, "Great God, shall I again become like that?" This being appeared at least sixty years of age; he looked rough, stupid, and startled. At the sound of the door, people made way for the new-comer; the judge turned his head, and guessing that the gentleman who had just entered was the mayor of M——, he bowed to him. The attorney-general, who had seen M. Madeleine at M——, whither his duties had more than once called him, recognized him, and also bowed. He scarcely noticed it, for he was under a sort of hallucination; he was looking at a judge, a clerk, policemen, a crowd of cruelly curious faces; he had seen all this once before, seven-and-twenty years ago. These mournful things he encountered again; they were there, moving, existing. It was no longer an effort of his memory, a mirage of his mind; they were real police, real judges, a real crowd, and real men of flesh and blood. He saw all the monstrous aspects of his past re-appear and live again around him, with all the terror that reality possesses. All this yawned before him; he felt terrified, closed his eyes, and exclaimed in his inner-most soul, "Never!" And by a tragic sport of fate which made all his ideas waver and drove him nearly mad, it was another self who was there. Everybody called this man who was being tried, Jean Valjean. Before him was an unheard-of vision,—a representation of the most horrible moment of his life played by his spectral image. All was there,—it was the same machinery, the same hour of the night, almost the same faces of judges, soldiers, and spectators. The only difference was that there was a crucifix over the judge's head, which had been removed from the courts at the time of his condemnation. When he was tried, God was absent. There was a chair behind him, into which he fell, terrified at the idea that people might see him. When he was seated, he took advantage of a pile of pasteboard cases on the judge's desk to hide his face from the spectators. He could now see without being seen; he fully regained the sense of reality, and gradually recovered.

He attained that phase of calmness in which a man can listen. Monsieur Bamatabois was serving on the jury. He looked for Javert, but could not see him, for the witnesses' bench was hidden by the clerk's table; and then, as we have said, the court was dimly lighted.

When he came in, the counsel for the defence was ending his speech. The attention of all was excited to the highest pitch; for three hours they had seen a man, a stranger, a miserable being, profoundly stupid or profoundly clever, gradually crushed beneath the weight of a fatal likeness. This man, as we already know, was a vagabond found in a field, carrying a branch covered with ripe apples, which had been broken off a tree in a neighbouring orchard. Who was this man? Inquiries had been made, and witnesses heard. They were unanimous; and light had been thrown by every incident of the trial. The prosecutor said: "We have got hold not only of a fruit-stealer, a marauder, but we have in our grasp a bandit, a man who has broken his ban, an ex-convict, a most dangerous villain, a malefactor of the name of Jean Valjean, whom justice has long sought, and who, eight years ago, on leaving Toulon, committed highway robbery with violence on a Savoyard lad, called Little Gervais,—a crime provided for by Article 383 of the penal code, for which we intend to prosecute him hereafter, when his identity has been formally established. He has just committed a fresh robbery, and that makes a second offence. Find him guilty of the new offence, and he will be tried at a later date for the old one." The prisoner seemed highly amazed at this charge and the unanimity of the witnesses; he made gestures and signs of denial, or else stared at the ceiling. He spoke with difficulty, answered with embarrassment, but from head to foot his whole person denied. He was like an idiot in the presence of all those intellects ranged in battle-array round him, and like a stranger in the midst of this society which seized him. Still, a most menacing future was hanging over him. The probability of his being Jean Valjean increased with each moment; and the en-

tire crowd regarded with greater anxiety than himself the doom which was gradually settling down on him. There was even a possibility of a death-penalty, should the identity be proved, and should he be hereafter found guilty of the attack on Little Gervais. Who was this man? What was the nature of his apathy? Was it imbecility or cunning? Did he understand too much, or did he understand nothing at all? These questions divided the crowd, and the jury seemed to share their confusion. There was something terrific and something puzzling in this case; the drama was not only gloomy, but it was obscure.

The counsel for the defence had argued rather cleverly in that provincial language which for a long time constituted the eloquence of the bar, and which all barristers formerly employed, not only at Paris, but at Romorantin or Montbrison as well, and which at the present day having become classic, is only spoken by public prosecutors, whom its serious sonorousness and majestic movement suit. It is the language in which a husband is called a "consort;" a wife, a "spouse;" Paris, "the centre of art and civilization;" the king, the "monarch;" the bishop, a "holy pontiff;" the public prosecutor, the "eloquent interpreter of the majesty of the law;" the pleadings, "the accents which we have just heard;" the age of Louis XIV., "the great age;" a theatre, the "temple of Melpomene;" the reigning family, the "august blood of our kings;" a concert, "a musical solemnity;" the general commanding in the department, the "illustrious warrior who," etc.; the pupils of the seminary, "those tender Levites;" the mistakes imputed to the newspapers, "the imposture which distils its venom in the columns of these organs," etc. The barrister had, consequently, begun by explaining away the robbery of the apples,—rather a difficult thing to do in this grand style; but Bossuet himself was obliged to allude to a fowl in the midst of a funeral oration, and got out of the difficulty with glory. The barrister had established the fact that the stealing of the apples was not actually proved. His client,

whom, in his quality of counsel, he persistently called Champmathieu, had not been seen by any one scaling a wall or breaking the branch. He had been arrested with the branch (which the lawyer preferred to call a "bough") in his possession; but he declared that he found 'it lying on the ground and picked it up. Where was the proof of the contrary? This branch had been broken off and then thrown away by the frightened robber, for doubtless there was one; but where was the evidence that this Champmathieu was a robber? Only one thing,—his being an ex-convict. The counsel did not deny that this fact seemed to be, unluckily, proved. The prisoner had lived at Faverolles; he had been a tree-pruner; the name of Champmathieu might possibly be derived from Jean Mathieu; lastly, four witnesses unhesitatingly recognized Champmathieu as the galley-slave, Jean Valjean. To these coincidences, to this testimony, the counsel could only oppose his client's denial, which was certainly that of an interested party; but, even supposing that he was the convict Jean Mathieu, did that prove that he was the apple-stealer? It was a presumption at the most, but not a proof. The accused, it was true,—and his counsel was obliged "in good faith" to allow it,—had adopted a bad system of defence; he insisted on denying everything,—not merely the robbery, but his character as convict. A confession of this latter point would doubtless have been better, and would have gained him the indulgence of his judges. The counsel had advised him to do this; but the prisoner had obstinately refused, probably in the belief that he would save everything by confessing nothing. This was wrong; but should not his scanty intellect be taken into consideration? This man was visibly stupid; long suffering at the galleys, long wretchedness out of them, had brutalized him, etc.; his defence was bad, but was that a reason to find him guilty? As for the offence against Little Gervais, the counsel need not discuss that, as it was not included in the indictment. The counsel wound up by imploring the jury and the court, if the identity of Jean Valjean appeared to them proven,

to punish him as a criminal who had broken his ban, and not to apply the fearful chastisement which falls on a convict guilty of a second offence.

The attorney-general replied. He was violent and flowery, as attorney-generals usually are. He congratulated the counsel for the defence on his "fairness," and cleverly took advantage of it; he attacked the prisoner through all the concessions which his counsel had made. His counsel seemed to admit that the prisoner was Jean Valjean, and he took note of this. Then this man was Jean Valjean. This was so much gained for the prosecution, and could not be contested; and here, reverting cleverly to the sources and causes of criminality, the attorney-general thundered against the immorality of the romantic school, at that time in its dawn under the name of the "Satanic school," given it by the critics of the "*Quotidienne*" and the "*Oriflamme*;" and he attributed not without some show of reason, the crime of Champmathieu, or, to speak more correctly, of Jean Valjean, to this corrupt literature. These reflections exhausted, he passed to Jean Valjean himself. Who was this Jean Valjean? Here came a description of Jean Valjean, a monster in human form, etc. The model of this sort of description will be found in the story of Theramènes, which is not useful to tragedy but daily renders great service to judicial eloquence. The audience and the jury "shuddered," and when the description ended, the attorney-general went on with an oratorical outburst intended to excite to the highest pitch the enthusiasm of the country papers which would appear next morning. "And it is such a man, etc., a vagabond, a beggar, having no visible means of support, etc., accustomed throughout his past life to culpable actions, and not improved by confinement in the galleys, as is shown by the crime committed on Little Gervais, etc.,—it is such a man, who, found on the high-road with the proof of robbery in his hand, and a few paces from the wall he had climbed, denies the fact, the robbery, denies everything, even to his name and his identity. In addition to a hundred

proofs to which we will not revert, four witnesses recognize him,—Javert, the upright inspector of police, and three of his old comrades in ignominy, the convicts Brevet, Chenildieu, and Cochapaille. And what does he oppose to this crushing unanimity? His denial. What hardness of heart! But you will do justice, gentlemen of the jury,” etc.

While the attorney-general was speaking, the prisoner listened with open mouth, and with a sort of amazement, in which there was certainly some admiration. He was evidently surprised that a man could speak like this. From time to time, at the most energetic apostrophes, when eloquence, unable to restrain itself, overflowed in a flux of branding epithets, and enveloped the prisoner in a tempest, he slowly moved his head from right to left, and from left to right, in the mute and melancholy protest with which he had contented himself ever since the beginning of the trial. Twice or thrice the spectators standing nearest to him heard him say in a low voice: “All this comes from not asking Monsieur Baloup.” The attorney-general drew the attention of the jury to this dull attitude, which was evidently intentional, and which denoted, not imbecility, but craft, cunning, and the habit of deceiving justice, and which brought out in its true light the “profound perverseness” of this man. He concluded by reserving the affair of Little Gervais, and by demanding a severe sentence. The counsel for the defence rose, began by complimenting the attorney-general on his “admirable speech,” and then replied as well as he could, but feebly; it was plain that the ground was giving way under him.

CHAPTER X

THE SYSTEM OF DENIALS

THE moment to close the trial had arrived. The judge ordered the prisoner to stand, and put the usual question: "Have you anything to say in your defence?" The man, who was rolling his hideous cap in his hands, made no reply, and the judge repeated his question. This time the man heard, and seemed to understand. He moved like a person who is waking, looked around him at the audience, the police, his counsel, the jury, and the court, laid his monstrous fist on the wood-work in front of his bench, looked again, and, suddenly fixing his eyes on the attorney-general began to speak. It was an eruption; from the way in which the words escaped from his lips, incoherent, impetuous, and pell-mell, it seemed as if they were all striving to get out at once. He said:—

"I have this to say. That I was a wheelwright in Paris, and worked for Master Baloup. It is a hard trade, is a wheelwright's. You always work in the open air, in yards, under sheds when you have a good master, but never in a room, because you want space, you see. In winter you are so cold that you swing your arms to warm yourself, but the masters don't like that, for they say it wastes time. Handling iron when there is ice between the paving-stones, is rough work; it soon uses a man up. You are old when quite young, in that trade. At forty, a man is done for. I was fifty-three, and had hard lines of it; and then the workmen are so cruel. When a man is not so young as he was, they call him nothing but old bird, old brute! I only earned thirty sous a day; for the masters took advantage of my age and paid me as little as they could. With that I had my daughter, who was a washerwoman in the river. She earned a little too; and the pair of us managed to live. She

was bothered too. All day in a tub up to your waist, in the snow and rain, and with the wind that cuts your face. When it freezes it is all the same, for you must wash. There are persons who have not much linen, and expect it home. If a woman did not wash, she would lose her customers. The planks are badly joined, and water drops on you everywhere. Her petticoats were wet through, over and under. That penetrates. She also worked at the wash-house of the Enfants Rouges, where the water is got from taps. You are not in the tub there; you wash at the tap before you, and rinse in the basin behind you. As it is shut up, you don't feel so cold; but there is the steaming hot water which ruins the sight. She came home at seven in the evening, and went to bed directly, for she was so tired. Her husband used to beat her. He is dead. We were not very happy. She was a good girl, who did not go to balls, and was very quiet. I remember one Shrove Tuesday on which she went to bed at eight o'clock. I am telling the truth. You need only inquire. Oh, yes, inquire! what an ass I am. Paris is a gulf. Who is there that knows Father Champmathieu? and yet, I tell you, Monsieur Baloup does. Ask him. After all, I do not know what you want of me."

The man ceased speaking, and remained standing.

He had said all this in a loud, quick, hoarse, hard voice, with a sort of angry and savage simplicity. Once he broke off to bow to somebody in the crowd. The affirmations which he seemed to throw out haphazard came from him in gasps, and he accompanied each by the gesture of a man chopping wood. When he had finished, his hearers burst into a laugh. He stared at the people, and seeing they were laughing, and understanding nothing, he began to laugh himself. That injured him. The judge, a grave, kindly man, spoke. He reminded the "gentlemen of the jury" that "Monsieur Baloup, formerly a master wheelwright, for whom the prisoner declared that he had worked, was a bankrupt, and had not been found when an attempt was made to serve him with a subpoena." Then, turning to the prisoner, he requested him

to listen to what he was about to say, and added: "You are in a situation which should cause you to reflect. The heaviest charges rest upon you, and may entail capital punishment. Prisoner, I ask you for the last time to explain yourself clearly on the two following facts: In the first place, did you,—yes or no,—climb the wall, break a branch, and steal apples; that is to say, break and enter? Secondly,—yes or no,—are you the discharged convict, Jean Valjean?"

The prisoner nodded his head with a confident air, like a man who understands and knows what answer he is going to make. He opened his mouth, turned to the judge, and said:—

"In the first place—"

Then he looked at his cap, looked at the ceiling, and held his tongue.

"Prisoner," said the attorney-general, in a stern voice, "pay attention. You make no answer to the questions that are asked you, and your confusion condemns you. It is evident that your name is not Champmathieu, but Jean Valjean, at first concealed under the name of Jean Mathieu, your mother's name; that you went to Auvergne; that your birth-place is Faverolles, where you were a pruner. It is evident that you stole ripe apples by clambering over a wall, and the gentlemen of the jury will form their own opinion."

The prisoner had sat down again, but he hurriedly rose when the attorney-general finished, and exclaimed:

"You are a bad man! This is what I wanted to say, but I could not think of it at first. I have stolen nothing. I am a man who does not eat every day. I was coming from Ailly, and walking after an inundation, which had made the whole country yellow. The very ponds had overflowed, and nothing grew in the sand except a few little blades of grass by the roadside. I found a branch with apples lying on the ground, and picked it up, little thinking it would bring me into trouble. I have been in prison, and been bullied for three months; and more than that I cannot say. People talk against me; I don't know why. They say to me, 'Answer.'

The policeman, who is a good-hearted fellow, nudges me with his elbow, and says, 'Why don't you answer?' I cannot explain myself, for I am no scholar, but only a poor man; and you are wrong not to see it. I have not stolen; I have only picked up things lying on the ground. You talk about Jean Valjean and Jean Mathieu. I do not know those persons; they are country folk. I used to work for Monsieur Baloup, Boulevard de l'Hôpital; and my name is Champmathieu. You are a very clever fellow to tell me where I was born, for I don't know. It is not everybody who has a house to come into the world in; that would be too comfortable. I believe that my father and mother were persons who went about the roads, but I do not know it, after all. When I was a boy I was called little one, and now I am called old fellow. Those are my Christian names, and you can take them as you please. I have been in Auvergne. I have been at Faverolles. Well, may not a man have been at those two places without having been to the galleys? I tell you that I have not stolen, and that my name is Champmathieu. I worked for M. Baloup, and was a householder. You vex me with your nonsense. Why is everybody so spiteful against me?"

The attorney-general who had remained standing, here addressed the judge:—

"In the presence of these confused but very clear denials on the part of the prisoner, who would like to pass for an idiot, but who, we warn him, will not succeed, we request that it may please you, sir, and the court to recall the prisoners Brevet, Cochepaille, and Chenildieu, and Police Inspector Javert, and to examine them again as to the identity of the prisoner with Jean Valjean."

"I must remind you," said the judge, "that Inspector Javert, having been recalled to his duties in a neighbouring town, left the court and the town immediately after giving his evidence. We authorized him to do so, with the consent of the attorney-general and the counsel for the defence."

"Perfectly correct, sir," continued the attorney-general.

"In the absence of Inspector Javert, I believe it my duty to remind the gentlemen of the jury of the statement which he made here a few hours ago. Javert is a worthy man, who honours by his rigorous and strict probity, inferior but important functions. His evidence is as follows: 'I do not require moral presumptions and material proof to contradict the prisoners' assertions, for I recognize him perfectly. This man's name is not Champmathieu. He is Jean Valjean, an ex-convict of a very violent and vicious character. It was with great reluctance that he was discharged when he completed his time. He had nineteen years' hard labour for theft, and made five or six attempts to escape. In addition to the Little Gervais affair and the larceny of the apples, I also suspect him of a robbery committed in the house of his Grace the late bishop of D——. I frequently saw him when I was assistant jailer at Toulon; and I repeat that I recognize him perfectly.'"

Such a precise statement seemed to produce a lively effect on the audience and the jury, and the attorney-general wound up by requesting that the other three witnesses should be brought in and re-examined. The judge gave an order to an usher, and a moment after the door of the witness-room opened. The usher, accompanied by a policeman, brought in the prisoner Brevet. The audience were all in suspense, and their breasts heaved as if they had but one soul among them. The ex-convict Brevet wore the black and gray jacket of the central prisons. He was a man about sixty years of age, who had the face of a business man and the look of a rogue, — these are sometimes seen together. He had become a sort of a jailer in the prison to which fresh offences had brought him, and was a man of whom his superior said, "He tries to make himself useful." The chaplains bore testimony to his religious habits; and it must not be forgotten that this trial took place under the Restoration.

"Brevet," said the judge, "as you have undergone an infamous sentence, you cannot be sworn."

Brevet looked down humbly.

"Still," continued the judge, "there may remain, by the permission of Heaven, a feeling of honour and equity even in the man whom the law has degraded; and it is to that feeling I appeal in this decisive hour. If it still exist in you, as I hope, reflect before answering me. Consider, on the one hand, this man, whom a word from you may ruin; on the other, justice, which a word from you may enlighten. The moment is a solemn one; and there is still time for you to retract, if you believe you are mistaken. Prisoner, stand up. Brevet, look at the prisoner. Think over your past memories, and tell us on your soul and conscience whether you still persist in recognizing this man as your old mate at the galleys, Jean Valjean."

Brevet looked at the prisoner, and then turned to the court.

"Yes, sir; I was the first who recognized him, and I stick to it. This man is Jean Valjean, who came to Toulon in 1796 and left in 1815. I came out a year later. He looks like a brute now, but age has brutalized him; he was crafty at the hulks. I recognize him positively."

"Sit down," said the judge. "Prisoner, remain standing."

Chenildieu was next brought in, a convict for life, as was shown by his red jacket and green cap. He was serving his time at Toulon, whence he had been fetched for this trial. He was a little man about fifty years of age, quick, wrinkled, thin, yellow, impudent, and feverish, who had in all his limbs and about his whole person a sort of sickly weakness, and immense force in his look. His mates at the galleys had nicknamed him I-deny-God. The judge addressed him much as he had done Brevet. When he reminded him that his crime robbed him of the right to take an oath, Chenildieu raised his head and looked boldly at the crowd. The judge begged him to reflect, and asked him if he still persisted in recognizing the prisoner. Chenildieu burst into a laugh:—

"I should think I do! Why, we were fastened to the same chain for five years. So you are sulky, old man?"

"Sit down," said the judge.

The usher brought in Cochepaille, another convict for life, who had been fetched from the galleys, and who was dressed in red like Chenildieu. He was a peasant of Lourdes and a semi-bear of the Pyrenees. He had been a shepherd in the mountains, and had gradually slipped into brigandage. Cochepaille was no less savage, and appeared even more stupid than the prisoner. He was one of those wretched men whom nature has laid out for wild beasts, and whom society finishes off as galley-slaves. The judge tried to move him by a few grave and pathetic words, and asked him, like the two others, whether he still persisted, without any hesitation or trouble; in recognizing the man standing before him.

"It is Jean Valjean," said Cochepaille. "He was nicknamed Jean the Jack, because he was so strong."

The statements of each of these three men, evidently sincere and made in good faith, aroused in the audience a murmur of evil omen for the prisoner, a murmur which grew louder and more prolonged every time that a fresh declaration was added to the preceding one. The prisoner himself listened with that amazed face which, according to the indictment, was his principal means of defence. At the first statement, the police heard him mutter between his teeth, "Well, that's a good one!" After the second, he said rather louder, and with an air of satisfaction, "Capital!" At the third, he exclaimed, "Famous!" The judge addressed him:—

"You have heard the evidence, prisoner; have you anything to say?"

He answered:—

"I say, 'famous!'"

A laugh broke out in the audience and almost infected the jury. It was plain that the man was lost.

"Ushers," said the judge, "order silence in the court; I am about to sum up."

At this moment there was a movement close beside the judge, and a voice was heard crying:—

"Brevet, Chenildieu, and Cochepaille, look this way." All

who heard the voice felt chilled to the heart, it was so lamentable and terrible. All eyes turned in the direction whence it came. A man seated among the privileged spectators behind the court, had arisen, pushed open the gate that separated the judges' bench from the audience, and stepped down into the centre of the court. The judge, the attorney-general, M. Bamatabois, twenty persons, recognized him, and exclaimed simultaneously, "Monsieur Madeleine!"

CHAPTER XI

CHAMPMATHIEU MORE AND MORE ASTOUNDED

IT was indeed he. The clerk's lamp lit up his face. He held his hat in his hand, there was no disorder in his dress, his coat was carefully buttoned. He was very pale, and trembled slightly; his hair, which had been grey when he reached Arras, was now perfectly white,—it had turned during the hour he had passed in the court. Every head was raised, the sensation was indescribable, and there was a momentary hesitation among the spectators. The voice was so full of agony, the man standing there seemed so calm, that at first they did not understand, and wondered who had spoken. They could not believe that that tranquil man could have uttered that terrific cry. This indecision lasted but a few moments. Before the judge and the attorney-general could utter a word, before the police and ushers could make a move, the man, whom all still called M. Madeleine, walked up to the witnesses, Brevet, Chenildieu, and Cochepaille.

"Do you not recognize me?" he asked.

All three stood amazed, and shook their heads, in token that they did not know him; Cochepaille, who was frightened, gave a military salute. M. Madeleine turned to the jury and the court, and said in a gentle voice:—

"Gentlemen of the jury, acquit the prisoner. Judge, ar-

rest me. He is not the man you seek, for — I am Jean Valjean.”

No one breathed,—the first commotion of astonishment was followed by a sepulchral silence. All felt that religious terror which seizes a crowd when something grand is done. The judge’s face, however, displayed sympathy and sorrow. He exchanged a rapid sign with the attorney-general, and a few words in a low voice with the recorders. He then turned to the spectators, and asked in accents which all understood:

“Is there a medical man present?”

The attorney-general then said:—

“Gentlemen of the jury, the strange and unexpected event which has disturbed the trial inspires us, as it does you, with a feeling which we need not express. You all know, at least by reputation, the worthy M. Madeleine, Mayor of M——. If there be a medical man here, we join the judge in begging him to attend M. Madeleine and remove him to his house.”

M. Madeleine did not allow the attorney-general to conclude, but interrupted him with gentleness and authority. These are the words he spoke. We reproduce them literally as they were written down by one of the witnesses of this scene, and as they still live in the ears of those who heard them just forty years ago:—

“I thank you, sir, but I am not mad, as you will soon see. You were on the point of committing a great error. Set that man at liberty. I am accomplishing a duty, for I am the hapless convict. I am the only man who sees clearly here, and I am telling you the truth. What I do at this moment, God above sees; and that is enough for me. You may arrest me, for here I am; and yet I did my best. I hid myself under another name, I became rich, I became mayor, and I wished to return to the society of honest men; but it seems that this is impossible. There are many things I cannot tell you, as I am not going to describe my life; for one day it will be known. It is true that I robbed the bishop; also that I robbed Little Gervais; and they were right to tell you that Jean Valjean was a dangerous villain,—though perhaps all the fault did

not lie with him. Listen, gentlemen of the court. A man so degraded as myself cannot remonstrate with Providence, or give advice to society; but I will say that the infamy from which I sought to emerge is an injurious thing, and the galleys make the convict what he is. Be good enough to bear that fact in mind. Before I went to Toulon, I was a poor peasant, with but little intelligence,—almost an idiot; but the galleys changed me. I was stupid; I became wicked. I was a log, and I became a fire-brand. At a later date, indulgence and goodness saved me in the same way as severity had destroyed me. But, forgive me; you cannot understand what I say. The two-franc piece I stole seven years ago from Little Gervais will be found at my house among the ashes in the fireplace. I have nothing more to add, so arrest me. Good heavens! The attorney-general shakes his head. You say M. Madeleine has gone mad; you do not believe me. This is a sad state of things. At least, do not condemn this man. What! Those three do not recognize me! Oh, I wish that Javert were here, for he would recognize me!”

No pen can render the kindly, grave melancholy of the tone in which these words were uttered. He then turned to the three convicts:—

“Well, I recognize you. Brevet, do you not remember me?” He broke off, hesitated for a moment, and said:—

“Can you remember the checkered braces you used to wear at the galleys?”

Brevet gave a start of surprise, and looked at him from head to foot in terror. Madeleine continued:

“Chenildieu,—who called yourself I-deny-God,—you have a deep burn on your right shoulder, because you placed it one day on a pan of charcoal in order to efface the three letters, T. F. P.,¹ which, however, are still visible. Answer me,—is this true?”

“It is true,” said Chenildieu.

“Cochepaille, you have near the hollow of your left arm a date marked in blue letters with burnt gunpowder. The

¹ *Travaux forcés perpétuels*,—“Hard labour for life.”

date is that of the Emperor's landing at Cannes, March 1, 1815. Roll up your sleeve."

Cochepaille did so, and every eye was turned to his bare arm. A policeman brought a lamp, and the date was there. The unhappy man turned to the audience and the judges with a smile, which to this day affects those who saw it. It was the smile of triumph, but it was also the smile of despair.

"You see plainly," he said, "that I am Jean Valjean."

In the hall there were now neither judges, accusers, nor police. There were only starting eyes and heaving hearts. No one thought of the part he might be called on to perform,—the attorney-general that he was there to prove a crime, the judge to pass sentence, and the prisoner's counsel to defend. It was a striking thing that no question was asked, no authority interfered. It is the property of sublime spectacles to seize on all minds and make spectators of all the witnesses. No one perhaps accounted for his feelings, no one said to himself that he saw the glory of a great light; but all felt dazzled in their hearts. It was evident that Jean Valjean stood before them. The appearance of this man was sufficient to throw a bright light on the affair which was so obscure a moment previous. Without any explanation, the entire crowd understood, as if by a sort of electric revelation, at once and at a glance, the simple and magnificent story of a man who denounced himself that another man might not be condemned in his place. Details, hesitation, any possible resistance, were lost in this vast, luminous fact. It was an impression which quickly passed away, but at the moment was irresistible.

"I will not occupy the time of the court longer," continued Jean Valjean; "I shall go, as I am not arrested, for I have several things to do. The attorney-general knows who I am; he knows where I am going; and he will order me to be arrested when he thinks proper."

He walked toward the door, and not a voice was raised, not an arm stretched forth to prevent him. All fell back, for

there was something divine in this incident, which caused the multitude to stand aside and make way for a single man. He slowly traversed the crowd. It was never known who opened the door, but it is certain that he found it open when he reached it. There, he turned and said:—

“I am at your orders, sir.”

Then he addressed the audience:—

“I presume that all of you consider me worthy of pity. Great God! when I think what I was on the point of doing, I consider myself worthy of envy. Still I should have preferred that all this had not taken place.”

He went out, and the door was closed as it had been opened; for men who do certain supreme deeds are always sure of being served by some one in the crowd. Less than an hour after, the verdict of the jury acquitted Champmathieu; and Champmathieu, who was at once set at liberty, went away in a state of stupefaction, believing all men mad, and not at all comprehending the vision which he had beheld.

BOOK VIII

THE COUNTERSTROKE

CHAPTER I

IN WHAT MIRROR M. MADELEINE LOOKS AT HIS HAIR

DAY was beginning to dawn. Fantine had passed a sleepless and feverish night, though full of bright visions, and toward morning fell asleep. Sister Simplicity, who was watching, took advantage of this slumber to go and prepare a fresh dose of bark. The worthy sister had been for some time in the surgery, stooping over her drugs and bottles, and looking carefully at them on account of the dim light which dawn spreads over all things. Suddenly she turned her head and gave a faint shriek. M. Madeleine had entered silently and was standing before her.

"Is it you, sir?" she exclaimed.

He answered in a low voice:—

"How is the poor creature?"

"Not so bad just at present, but she has frightened us terribly."

She explained what had occurred; how Fantine had been very ill the previous day, but was now better, because she believed that he had gone to Montfermeil to fetch her child. The sister did not dare question him, but she could see from his looks that he had not been there.

"All that is well," he said. "You did right not to un-deceive her."

"Yes," continued the sister, "but now that she sees you, sir, and does not see her child, what are we to tell her?"

He considered a moment.

"God will inspire us," he said.

"Still, we cannot tell a lie," the sister murmured in a low voice.

It was now broad day in the room, and the light fell full on M. Madeleine's face. The sister raised her eyes by chance.

"Good gracious, sir!" she exclaimed; "what can have happened to you? Your hair is quite white."

"White!" said he.

Sister Simplicity had no mirror, but she took from a drawer a small looking-glass which the infirmary doctor employed to make sure that a patient was dead, and no longer breathed. M. Madeleine took this glass, looked at his hair, and said, "So it is." He said it carelessly, and as if thinking of something else, and the sister felt chilled by some unknown terror of which she caught a glimpse in all this. He asked:—

"Can I see her?"

"Will you not get her child for her, sir?" the sister said, hardly daring to ask the question.

"Of course; but it will take at least two or three days."

"If she were not to see you till then, sir," the sister continued timidly, "she would not know that you had returned. It would be easy to keep her quiet; and when her child came, she would naturally think that you had returned with it. That would not be telling a falsehood."

M. Madeleine appeared to reflect for a few moments, and then said with his calm gravity:—

"No, sister, I must see her; for I am possibly pressed for time."

The nun did not seem to notice the word "possibly," which gave an obscure and singular meaning to the mayor's remark. She answered in a low voice:—

"Then you can go in, sir, though she is asleep."

He made a few remarks about a door that closed badly, and whose creaking might awake the patient, then entered Fantine's room, went up to the bed, and opened the curtains. She was asleep. Her breath issued from her chest with that tragic sound, peculiar to these diseases, which breaks the hearts of poor mothers who watch by the side of a sleeping child for whom there is no hope; but this painful breathing scarce disturbed an ineffable serenity spread over her face, which transfigured her in her sleep. Her pallor had become whiteness. Her cheeks were carnation. Her long, fair lashes, the sole beauty that remained of her virginity and youth, quivered, though remaining closed. Her whole person trembled as if she had wings which were on the point of expanding and bearing her away. To see her thus, no one could have believed that she was in an almost hopeless state; for she rather resembled a woman about to fly away than one who is going to die. The branch, when the hand approaches to pluck the flowers, quivers, and seems at once to retire and to advance. The human body undergoes something like this shudder when the moment comes for the mysterious fingers of death to pluck the soul.

M. Madeleine stood for some time motionless by the bed, looking first at the patient and then at the crucifix, as he had done two months previously, on the day when he came for the first time to see her in this asylum. They were both in the same attitude,—she sleeping, he praying; but in those two months her hair had turned gray, and his white. The sister had not come in with him. He was standing by the bedside, finger on lip, as if there were some one in the room whom he was bidding to be silent. She opened her eyes, saw him, and said calmly, with a smile:—

“And Cosette?”

CHAPTER II

FANTINE IS HAPPY

SHE gave no start of surprise, no start of joy, for she was joy itself. The simple question, "And Cosette?" was asked in such profound faith, with so much certainty, with such an utter absence of anxiety and doubt, that he could not find a word to say. She continued:—

"I knew you were there; for though I was asleep, I saw. I have seen you for a long time, and have gazed at you all night. You were in a glory, and had around you all sorts of heavenly faces." She looked up to the crucifix. "But," she continued, "tell me where Cosette is. Why was she not laid in my bed so that I could see her directly I woke?"

He mechanically answered something which he could never recall. Luckily the physician, who had been summoned, came to M. Madeleine's assistance.

"My dear girl," said the physician, "calm yourself. Your child is here."

Fantine's eyes sparkled and covered her whole face with brightness. She clasped her hands with an expression which contained alike all the violence and all the gentleness possible to a prayer."

"Oh," she exclaimed, "bring her to me!"

Touching maternal illusion! Cosette was still to her the little child who must be carried.

"Not yet," the physician continued; "not now. You have a little fever hanging about you. The sight of your child would agitate you and do you harm. You must get well first."

She impetuously interrupted him:—

"But I am well! I tell you I am well. What a donkey this doctor is. I insist on seeing my child."

"There, you see," said the physician, "how excited you

are! So long as you are like that, I shall forbid you having your child. It is not enough to see her; you must live for her. When you are reasonable, I will bring her myself."

The poor mother hung her head.

"Doctor, I ask your pardon. I sincerely ask your pardon. In former times I should not have spoken as I did just now; but I have gone through so much unhappiness that I do not always know what I am saying. I understand. You are afraid of the excitement. I will wait as long as you like, but I swear that it would not do me any harm to see my child. I see her; I have not taken my eyes off her all night. Did you know it? If she were brought to me now, I should talk very quietly to her. That's all. Is it not very natural that I should want to see my child, who has been fetched from Montfermeil expressly for me? I am not angry, for I know very well that I am going to be happy. The whole night I have seen white things and smiling faces. The doctor will bring me Cosette when he likes. I have no fever now, because I am cured. I feel that there is nothing the matter with me; but I will behave as if I were ill, and not stir, so as to please these ladies. When you see that I am quite calm, you will say, 'We must give her her child.'"

M. Madeleine had seated himself in a chair by the bedside. She turned to him, visibly making an effort to appear calm and "very good," as she said in that weakness of illness which resembles childhood, in order that, seeing her so peaceful, there might be no difficulty about bringing Cosette to her. Still, while checking herself, she could not refrain from asking M. Madeleine a thousand questions.

"Have you had a pleasant journey, sir? Oh, how kind it was of you to go and fetch her for me! Only tell me how she is. Did she stand the journey well? Alas! she will not recognize me; she will have forgotten me in all this time, poor darling. Children have no memory. They are like the birds. To-day they see one thing and to-morrow another, and do not think about anything. Had she clean underclothing? Did those Thénardiens keep her clean? What

food did they give her? Oh, if you only knew how I suffered when I asked myself all these questions during the period of my wretchedness! But now it is all passed away, and I am happy. Oh, how I should like to see her! Is not she pretty, sir? You must have been cold in the stage-coach. Can she not be brought here just for a moment? She could be taken away again directly afterward. You could do it if you liked, as you are the mayor."

He took her hand and said, "Cosette is lovely; she is well; you will see her soon, but calm yourself. You speak too eagerly; and then you put your arms out of bed, which will make you cough."

In fact a fit of coughing interrupted Fantine at nearly every word. She did not object; she feared lest she had injured the confidence she wished to inspire, by too impassioned entreaties, and she began talking of indifferent matters.

"Montfermeil is rather a pretty place, is it not? In summer, pleasure parties go there. Have those Thénardiens a good trade? Not many people pass through the village, and theirs is a sort of pot-house."

M. Madeleine still held her hand, and looked at her anxiously. It was evident that he had come to tell her something from which he now shrank. The physician had left, and Sister Simplicity alone remained with them. In the midst of this silence Fantine exclaimed: "I hear her; I hear her!" She put out her hand to command silence, held her breath, and listened in ecstasy. A child was playing in the yard; probably it belonged to one of the workmen. It was one of those accidents which constantly occur, and which seem to form part of the mysterious stage-setting of mournful events. The child, a little girl, was running about to warm herself, laughing and singing loudly. Alas! what is there in which children's games are not mingled?

"Oh," continued Fantine, "'tis my Cosette! I recognize her voice."

The child went away as it had come. Her voice died out.

Fantine listened for some time; then her face clouded, and M. Madeleine heard her murmur, "How unkind that doctor is not to let me see my child! That man has a bad face."

Still, her cheerful ideas returned, and she continued to talk to herself, with her head on the pillow. "How happy we shall be! We will have a small garden, for M. Madeleine has promised me that. My child will play in the garden. She must know her alphabet by this time, and I will teach her to spell. She will chase butterflies, and I shall look at her. Then she will take her first communion. Let me see when that will be."

She began counting on her fingers:—

"One, two, three, four,—she is now seven years old. In five years, then, she will wear a white veil, open-work stockings, and look like a little lady. Oh, my good sister, you cannot think how foolish I am, for I am thinking of my daughter's first communion."

And she began to laugh. Madeleine had let go Fantine's hand, and listened to these words as one listens to the sougling breeze, with his eyes on the ground, and his mind plunged in unfathomable reflections. All at once she ceased speaking; and this made him raise his head mechanically. Fantine had become frightful to look at. She no longer spoke; she no longer breathed. She was half sitting up, and her thin shoulder projected from her night-gown. Her face, radiant a moment before, was ghastly, and she seemed to fix her eyes, dilated by terror, upon something awful at the other end of the room.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter with you, Fantine?"

She did not answer; she did not remove her eyes from the object — whatever it might be — which she fancied she saw; but she touched his arm with one hand, and with the other made him a sign to look behind him. He turned and saw Javert.

CHAPTER III

JAVERT IS SATISFIED

THIS is what had occurred. Half-past twelve was striking when M. Madeleine left the assize court of Arras; and he returned to the hotel just in time to start by the mail-cart in which he had booked his place. A little before six A. M. he reached M——, and his first care was to post the letter for Lafitte, then to proceed to the infirmary and see Fantine. Still, he had scarce quitted the court ere the attorney-general, recovering from his stupor, rose to his feet, deplored the act of mania on the part of the honourable mayor of M——, declared that his convictions were in no way modified by this strange incident, which would be cleared up hereafter, and demanded in the interim the conviction of this Champmathieu, evidently the true Jean Valjean. The persistency of the attorney-general was visibly at variance with the feelings of all,—the public, the court, and the jury. The counsel for the defence had little difficulty in refuting his arguments and in establishing that through the revelations of M. Madeleine, that is to say, the real Jean Valjean, circumstances were entirely altered, and the jury had an innocent man before them. The barrister deduced a few unluckily rather stale arguments about judicial errors, etc. The judge, in his summing up, supported him; and the jury in a few moments acquitted Champmathieu. Still, the attorney-general wanted a Jean Valjean; and, as he no longer had Champmatheiu, he took Madeleine. Immediately after Champmatheiu was acquitted he had a conference with the judge as to the necessity of arresting the mayor of M——; and his first emotion having passed off, the judge raised but few objections. Justice must take its course; and then, to tell the truth, although the judge was a kind and rather sensible man, he was at the same time a very ardent

royalist, and was offended because the mayor of M——, in alluding to the landing at Cannes, said "the Emperor," and not "Bonaparte." The order of arrest was consequently made out, and at once sent off by express to M——, addressed to Inspector Javert, who, as we know, returned home immediately after he had given his evidence.

Javert was just dressing when the messenger handed him the order of arrest and the warrant. This messenger was himself a very skilful policeman, who informed Javert in two words of what had occurred at Arras. The order of arrest, signed by the attorney-general, was thus conceived: "Inspector Javert will arrest Monsieur Madeleine, mayor of M——, who in this day's session was recognized as the discharged convict, Jean Valjean." Any one who did not know Javert, and had seen him when he entered the infirmary anteroom, could not have guessed what was taking place, but would have thought he looked just as usual. He was cool, calm, serious, his gray hair was smoothed down on his temples, and he went up the stairs with his usual deliberation; but any one who was well acquainted with him, and who examined him closely, would have shuddered. The buckle of his leather stock, instead of sitting in the nape of his neck, was under his left ear. This revealed an extraordinary agitation. Javert was a complete character, without a crease in his duty or in his uniform, methodical with criminals, and rigid with his coat-buttons. For him to have his stock out of order, it was necessary for him to suffer from one of those emotions which might be called internal earthquakes. He had merely fetched a corporal and four men from the station close by, left them in the yard, and had Fantine's room pointed out to him by the unsuspecting portress, who was accustomed to hear policemen ask for the mayor.

On reaching Fantine's door, Javert turned the handle, pushed the door open with the gentleness of a sick-nurse or a spy, and entered. Correctly speaking, he did not enter. He stood in the half-opened door with his hat on his head, and his left hand thrust into the breast of his great-coat,

which was buttoned to the chin. Under his elbow was the leaden knob of his enormous cane, which was concealed behind his back. He stood thus for nearly a minute, no one perceiving his presence. All at once Fantine raised her eyes, saw him, and made M. Madeleine turn. At the moment when Madeleine's glance met that of Javert, the latter, without stirring or drawing near, became fearful. No human feeling can be so horrible as joy. It was the face of a fiend who has just found a condemned soul. The certainty of at length holding Jean Valjean caused all that was in his soul to appear on his countenance, and the stirred-up sediment rose to the surface. The humiliation of having for a while lost the trail, and of having been mistaken with regard to Champmathieu was effaced by his pride at having guessed so correctly in the beginning, and having had a true instinct for such a length of time. Javert's satisfaction was displayed in his sovereign attitude, and the deformity of triumph overspread his narrow forehead.

Javert at this moment was in heaven. Without distinctly comprehending the fact, but still with a confused intuition of his necessity and his success, he, Javert, personified justice, light, and truth in their celestial function of crushing evil. He had behind him, around him, at an infinite depth, authority, reason, the legal conscience, the public prosecution, all the stars. He protected order, he drew down the thunders of the law, he avenged society, he rendered assistance to the absolute. There was in his victory a remnant of defiance and combat. Upright, haughty, and dazzling, he flaunted the superhuman bestiality of a ferocious archangel in the bright azure of heaven. The fearful shadow of the deed he was doing, rendered visible in his clenched fist the flashing social sword. Happy and indignant, he held beneath his heel crime, vice, perdition, rebellion, and hell. He was radiant; he exterminated, he smiled, and there was an undoubted grandeur in this monstrous Saint Michael. Javert, though terrifying, was not ignoble. Probity, sincerity, candour, conviction, and the idea of duty are things which, when mistaken, may

become hideous, but which, even if hideous, are grand. Their majesty, peculiar to the human conscience, persists in the midst of horror; they are virtues which have but one vice,—error. The pitiless, honest joy of a fanatic, in the full flood of his atrocity, retains a touching and venerable radiance. Without suspecting it, Javert, in his terrible happiness, was to be pitied, like every ignorant man who triumphs. Nothing could be so heart-rending and terrible as that face, in which was displayed all that may be called the wickedness of the good.

CHAPTER IV

AUTHORITY RESUMES ITS RIGHTS

FANTINE had not seen Javert since the day when the mayor tore her from his clutches, and her sickly brain could form no thought save that he had come to fetch her. She could not endure his frightful face. She felt herself dying. She buried her face in her hands, and cried in agony: —

“Monsieur Madeleine, save me!”

Jean Valjean,—we shall not call him otherwise in future,—had risen, and said to Fantine in his gentlest, calmest voice: —

“Do not be alarmed. He has not come for you.”

Then he turned to Javert, and said: —

“I know what you want.”

And Javert answered: —

“Come, be quick about it.”

The tone in which these words were spoken was savage and frenzied. He did not say, “Be quick about it!” he said, “Bequibaboutit!” No orthography could do justice to his tone, for it was no longer human speech; it was a roar. He did not proceed as usual; he did not enter into the

matter, or display his warrant. To him Jean Valjean was a sort of mysterious combatant, a strange wrestler, with whom he had been struggling for five years, without being able to throw him. This arrest was not a beginning, but an end; and he confined himself to saying, "Come, be quick about it!" As he said this, he did not advance a step. He merely darted at Jean Valjean a look which he threw out as a grapple, and with which he was used to draw wretches violently to him. It was this look which Fantine had felt pierce her very marrow two months before. At Javert's roar, Fantine opened her eyes again; but the mayor was there, so what had she to fear? Javert advanced to the middle of the room and cried:—

"Look here, are you coming?"

The unhappy girl looked about her. No one was present but the nun and the mayor. To whom, then, could this humiliating remark be addressed? Only to herself. She shuddered. Then she saw an extraordinary thing, so extraordinary that nothing like had ever appeared to her in the darkest delirium of fever. She saw the policeman, Javert, seize the mayor by the collar, and she saw the mayor bow his head. It seemed to her as if the end of the world had come.

"Mr. Mayor!" screamed Fantine.

Javert burst into a laugh,—that frightful laugh which showed all his teeth.

"There is no mayor here."

Jean Valjean did not attempt to remove the hand that grasped his collar. He said:—

"Javert —"

Javert interrupted him: "Call me Mr. Inspector."

—"I should like to say a word to you in private, sir," continued Jean Valjean.

"Speak up," Javert answered, "speak up; people talk aloud to me."

Jean Valjean went on in a low voice:—

"I have a request to make of you."

"I tell you to speak up."

"But no one else must hear it —"

"What do I care for that? I am not listening!"

Jean Valjean turned to him and said rapidly, and in a very low voice:—

"Grant me three days! Three days to go and fetch this unhappy woman's child! I will pay whatever you ask, and you can go with me if you like."

"You must be joking," cried Javert. "Why, I did not think you were such a fool! You ask me to give you three days that you may bolt! You say that it is to fetch this girl's brat! Oh! ho! that is fine, very fine!"

Fantine trembled.

"My child!" she exclaimed; "to go and fetch my child? Then she is not here! Sister, answer me,—where is Cosette? I want my child! Monsieur Madeleine! Mr. Mayor!"

Javert stamped his foot.

"There is the other beginning now. Will you be quiet, wench? A devilish country this is, where galley-slaves are magistrates, and street-walkers are nursed like countesses. Well, well, it will be altered now, and it's high time."

He glared at Fantine, and added, as he took a fresh hold of Jean Valjean's cravat, shirt, and coat-collar:—

"I tell you there is no M. Madeleine and no mayor here, but there is a robber, a brigand, a convict named Jean Valjean, and I've got him,—that's what there is."

Fantine started up in bed, supporting herself on her stiffened arms and on both hands. She looked at Jean Valjean. She looked at Javert. She looked at the nun. She opened her mouth as if to speak, but there was a rattle in her throat, her teeth chattered, she stretched out her arms in agony, convulsively opened her hands, clutched like one drowning, and then suddenly fell back on the pillow. Her head struck against the head-board, and fell forward on her breast, with gaping mouth and staring, sightless eyes,—she was dead. Jean Valjean laid his hand on Javert's detaining



"He therefore remained, clutched his stick by the small end, and leaned against the door-post, without taking his eyes off Jean Valjean."

Les Misérables. Fantine: Page 319.



hand, opened it as if it had been a child's hand, and then said:—

“You have killed this woman.”

“Enough!” Javert shouted furiously. “I am not here to listen to abuse, so you can save your breath. There is a guard below, so come on, or I shall handcuff you.”

There was a rickety old iron bedstead in the corner of the room, which the sisters used as a sofa when they had to sit up at night. Jean Valjean went to this bed, tore off the head-piece in a twinkling (an easy thing for muscles like his), seized the supporting bar, and looked at Javert. Javert shrank back to the door. Jean Valjean, with the iron bar in his hand, walked slowly up to Fantine's bed. When he reached it, he turned and said to Javert in a scarcely audible voice:

“I would advise you not to disturb me just at present.”

One thing is certain, Javert trembled. He thought of going to fetch the guard; but Jean Valjean might take advantage of his absence to escape. He therefore remained, clutched his stick by the small end, and leaned against the door-post, without taking his eyes off Jean Valjean. The latter rested his elbow on the bedstead, and his head on his hand, and gazed at Fantine, who lay motionless before him. He remained thus, absorbed and silent, and had evidently forgotten everything else connected with this life. On his face and in his attitude there was only an indescribable pity. After a few minutes passed in this revery, he stooped over Fantine, and spoke to her in a low voice. What did he say? What could that outcast man say to that dead woman? No one on earth heard the words, but did that dead woman hear them? There are touching illusions, which are perhaps sublime realities. One thing is indubitable; Sister Simplicity, the sole witness of what took place, has frequently declared that when Jean Valjean whispered in Fantine's ear, she distinctly saw an ineffable smile play round her pale lips and in her dim eyes, filled with the wonder of the tomb. Jean Valjean took Fantine's head in both hands, and laid it on

the pillow, as a mother might have done to a child. Then he tied the strings of her night-gown, and thrust her hair under her cap. When this was done, he closed her eyes. Fantine's face at that moment seemed strangely illumined; for death is the entrance into brilliant light. Fantine's hand hung out of bed. Jean Valjean knelt down before that hand, gently raised and kissed it. Then he rose and turned to Javert:—

“Now I am at your service.”

CHAPTER V

A FITTING TOMB

JAVERT placed Jean Valjean in the town jail. The arrest of M. Madeleine produced a sensation, or rather an extraordinary commotion in M——; but we regret to say that nearly everybody abandoned him on hearing that he had been a galley-slave. In less than two hours all the good he had done was forgotten, and he was only a galley-slave. It is but fair to add, though, that the details of the affair at Arras were not yet known. The whole day through, conversations like the following could be heard in all parts of the town:—

“Don't you know? He is a discharged convict.”

“Who is?”

“The mayor.”

“Nonsense! M. Madeleine?”

“Yes.”

“Really?”

“His name is not Madeleine, but some hideous thing like Bejean, Bojean, Boujean.”

“Oh, my goodness!”

“He has been arrested.”

“Arrested?”

“And will remain in the town jail till he is removed.”

“Removed? Where to?”

“He will be tried at the assizes for a highway robbery which he once committed.”

“Well, do you know, I always suspected that man, for he was too kind, too perfect, too devout. He refused the Cross, and gave half-pence to all the little scamps he met. I always thought that there was some black history behind.”

The “drawing-rooms” made the most of the occasion. An old lady, who subscribed to the “Drapeau Blanc,” made this remark, whose depth it is almost impossible to fathom:—

“Well, I am not sorry; for it will be a lesson to the Bonapartists.”

It is thus that the phantom known as M. Madeleine vanished from M——. Only three or four persons in the whole town remained faithful to his memory, and his old servant was one of them. On the evening of that same day this worthy old woman was sitting in her lodge, still all in a quiver, and indulging in sad thoughts. The factory had been closed all day, the gates were bolted, and the street was deserted. There was no one in the house but the two nuns, — Sister Perpetua and Sister Simplicity,— who were watching by Fantine’s body. Toward the hour when M. Madeleine was wont to come home, the worthy portress rose mechanically, took from a drawer the key of his bedroom, and the candlestick which he used at night to go upstairs. Then she hung the key on the nail from which he usually took it, and placed the candlestick by its side, as if she expected him. Then she sat down again and resumed her sad thoughts. The poor old woman had done all this unconsciously. She did not wake from her revery for more than two hours, and then she exclaimed, “Only think of that! I have hung his key on the nail!”

At this moment the window opened, a hand was passed through the opening, which seized the key and lit the candle by her taper. The portress raised her eyes and stood with

gaping mouth, but she repressed the cry which rose to her lips; for she recognized this hand, this arm, this coat-sleeve, as belonging to M. Madeleine. It was some seconds ere she could speak, for she "was struck dumb," as she said afterward when describing the adventure.

"Good gracious, Mr. Mayor!" she at length exclaimed, "I thought you were —"

She stopped, for the end of the sentence would have been disrespectful to the first part. Jean Valjean was still the mayor to her. He completed her thought.

"That I was in prison?" he said. "So I was, but I pulled a bar from the window, leaped out, and here I am. I am going to my room; go and fetch Sister Simplicity, who doubtless is with that poor woman."

The old servant hastened to obey; he gave her no warning, for he was quite sure that she would guard him better than he could guard himself. It was never known how he managed to get into the yard without having the gate opened.

He always carried a pass-key, which opened a little side door; but he must have been searched and this key taken from him. This point was never explained. He went up the stairs that led to his room, and on reaching the landing, left the candle on the top stair, closed his window and shutters in the dark, and then entered the room with the candle. This precaution was useful, for it will be remembered that his window could be seen from the street. He took a glance around, at his table, his chair, his bed, which had not been slept in for three nights. No trace of the disorder of the night before last remained, for the portress had "done his room;" but she had picked out of the ashes and laid neatly on the table the two iron ends of the stick and the forty-sous piece, which was blackened by the fire. He took a sheet of paper, on which he wrote, "This is the two-franc piece stolen from Little Gervais, to which I alluded in court;" and he laid the coin on the paper, so that it should be the first thing seen on entering the room. He took from a drawer an old shirt,

which he tore up, and wrapped the two candlesticks in the rags. Still he displayed no haste or agitation; and while wrapping up the candlesticks, he ate a piece of black bread, — probably the prison bread which he had taken with him on his escape. This fact was proved by the crumbs found on the floor when the authorities made an investigation at a later date. There were two gentle taps at the door.

“Come in,” he said.

It was Sister Simplicity. She was pale, her eyes were red, and the candle she held shook in her hand. Violent events of destiny have this peculiarity, that however perfect or cold we may be, they draw human nature out of our entrails and compel it to re-appear on the surface. Amid the emotions of this day the nun had become a woman again. She had wept, and was trembling. Jean Valjean had just finished writing some lines on a piece of paper, which he handed to the sister, with the remark, “Sister, you will deliver this to the priest.”

As the paper was open, she glanced at it. “You may read it,” he said.

She read, “I request the priest to take charge of all that I leave here. He will be good enough to defray out of it the costs of my trial and the interment of the woman who died this morning. The rest will be for the poor.”

The sister attempted to speak, but could only produce a few inarticulate sounds. At length she managed to say: —

“Do you not wish to see the poor unhappy girl for the last time, sir?”

“No,” he said, “I am pursued; and if I were to be arrested in her room it would disturb her.”

He had scarce said this ere a great noise broke out on the staircase. They heard the sound of ascending steps, and heard the old servant cry out in her loudest and most piercing voice: —

“My good sir, I can take my oath that no one has come in here all day or all the evening, and I have not left my post once.”

A man answered:—

“But there is a light in that room.”

They recognized Javert's voice. The room was so built that the door, on being thrown open, concealed the corner of the right-hand wall. Jean Valjean blew out the light and crept into the corner. Sister Simplicity fell on her knees by the table as the door opened and Javert entered. The voices of several men and the protestations of the old portress were heard. The nun did not raise her eyes. She was praying. Her candle was on the chimney-piece, and gave but little light, and on seeing the nun Javert halted in great confusion. It will be remembered that the very basis of Javert, his element, the air he breathed, was reverence for all authority. He was solid, and allowed no objection or limitation. With him, of course, ecclesiastical authority was the highest of all. He was religious, superficial, and correct on this point as on all. In his eyes, a priest was a spirit who never errs; a nun, a creature who does not sin. Theirs were souls walled up against the world, with only one door, which never opened except to let truth pass out. On seeing the sister, his first movement was to withdraw; but he had another duty, too, which imperiously urged him in an opposite direction. His second impulse was to remain and to venture at least one question. Sister Simplicity had never told a falsehood in her life. Javert was aware of this and especially revered her for it.

“Sister,” he asked, “are you alone in the room?”

There was a terrible moment, during which the old servant felt as if she were going to faint. The sister raised her eyes and said, “Yes.”

“Then,” continued Javert, “I beg your pardon for insisting, but it is my duty. You have not seen this evening a person, a man who has escaped, and for whom we are searching,—that Jean Valjean? Have you seen him?”

The sister answered, “No.”

She had told two lies, one on top of the other, without hesitation, rapidly, as if sacrificing herself.

"I beg your pardon," said Javert; and he withdrew with a deep bow.

Oh, holy woman, it is many years since you were on this earth. You have rejoined in the light your sister virgins and your brother angels. May this lie be placed to your credit in paradise!

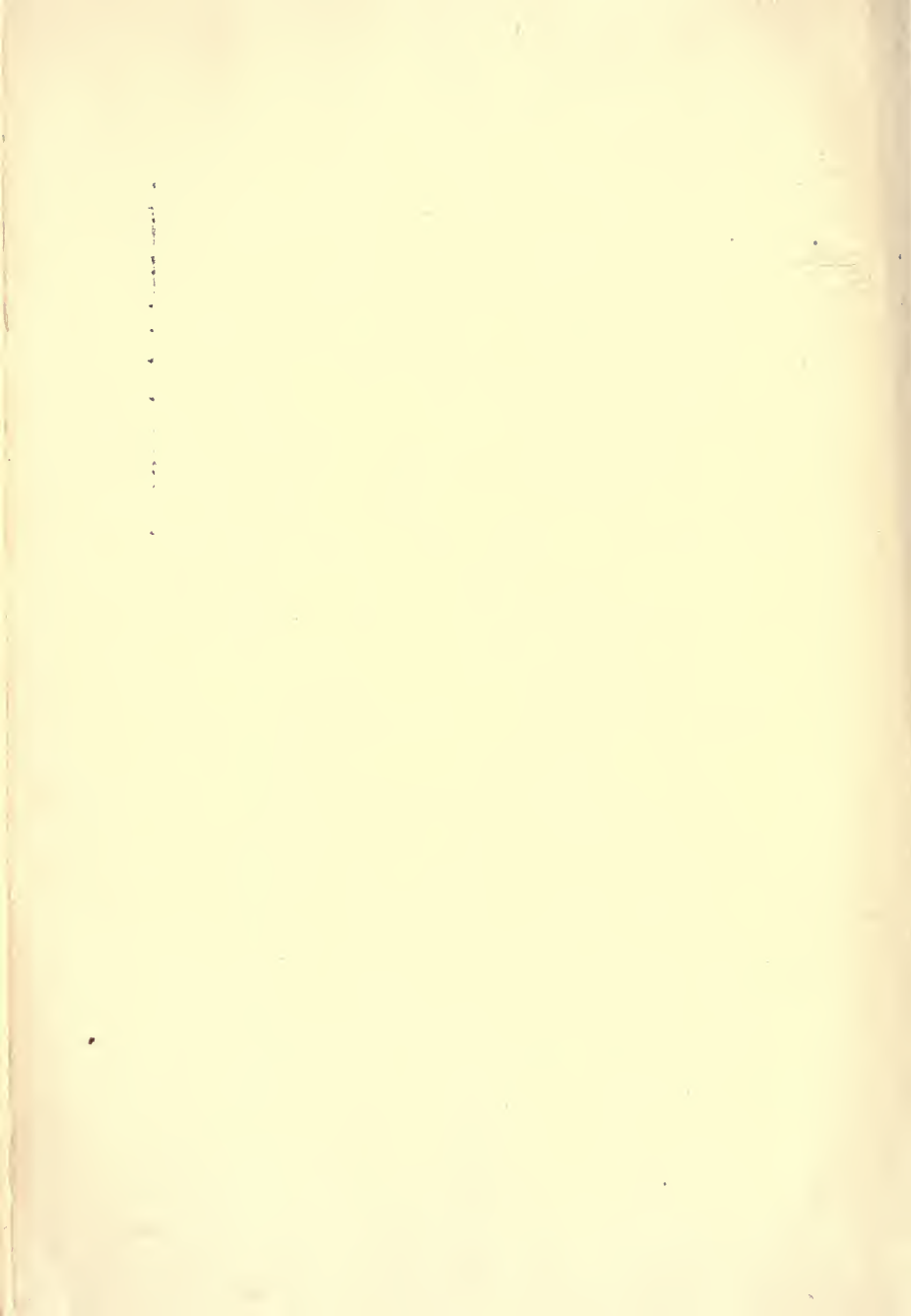
The sister's assertion was so decisive for Javert that he did not notice the singular fact of the candle which was just blown out, and still smoked on the table.

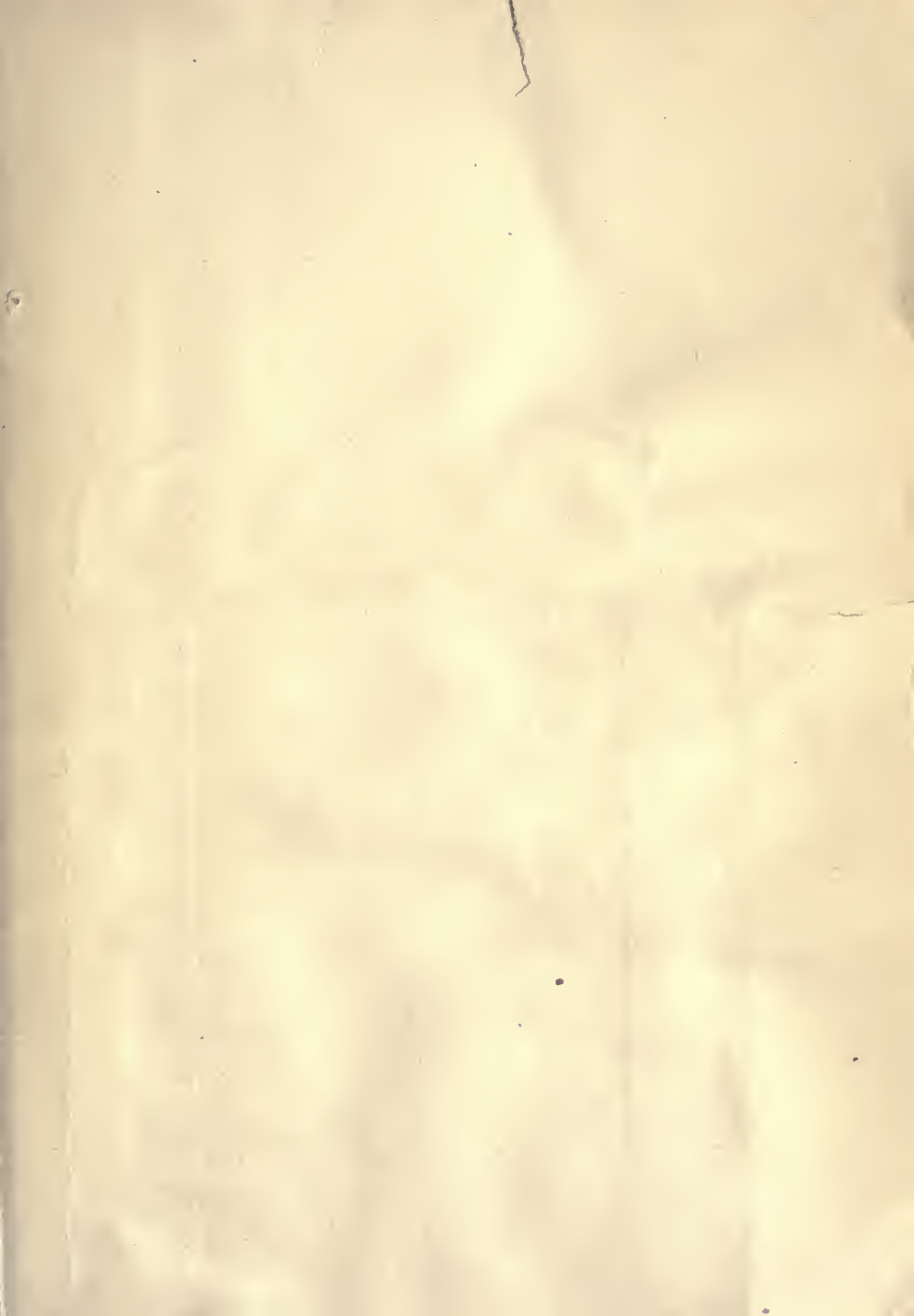
An hour later a man, making his way through the fog, was hurrying away from M—— in the direction of Paris. This man was Jean Valjean; and it was proved by the testimony of two or three carriers who met him, that he was carrying a bundle, and was dressed in a blouse. Where did he get that blouse? It was never known; but, a few days before, an old workman had died in the infirmary of the factory, leaving nothing but his blouse. It might have been that one.

One last word about Fantine. We have all one mother,—the earth; and Fantine was given back to that mother. The priest thought he was doing his duty, and perhaps did it, in keeping as much money as he possibly could out of what Jean Valjean left him for the poor. After all, whose business was it? A convict and a street-walker. Hence he simplified Fantine's interment, and reduced it to what is called "a pauper's grave." Fantine was therefore interred in the free corner of the cemetery, which belongs to everybody and to nobody, and where the poor are lost. Fortunately, God knows where to look for a soul. Fantine was laid in the shade among a pile of promiscuous bones in a pauper's grave. Her tomb was like her bed.









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